

Mrs Sarah Poxon  
Stafford Borough Council  
Planning Department  
Civic Offices  
Riverside  
Stafford  
ST16 3AQ



27 May 2015

Dear Mrs. Poxon

**Ref: Planning Application No. 15/22017/OUT Outline application for residential development comprising up to 50 detached /semi-detached properties, Land Adjacent To 24 The Croft, Off Church Lane, Hixon**

The Hixon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group wishes to register its strong objection to the above planning application.

In May 2014, the Steering Group delivered an eleven page questionnaire to all 770 households in Hixon parish area, including Lea Heath and Pasturefields. 460 completed questionnaires, equating to 59.7%, were returned; a huge response by any measure.

The Steering Group accepted that Hixon should take its proportion of the 1200 new dwellings to be built in the eleven key service village over the lifetime (2011 to 2031) of the adopted Plan for Stafford. An equal division of the 1200 new dwellings across the KSVs would mean each having to accommodate approximately 110 properties over a twenty year period. Notwithstanding that Hixon, by population is the sixth largest KSV, the Steering Group recommended a total of 125 new properties in Hixon parish up to 2031. Before the questionnaires were delivered a planning application for 76 houses off New Road, Hixon (Application 13/19249OUT) was approved by Stafford Borough Council planning committee. The Steering Group revised the questionnaire to reflect this change and asked households whether they thought 50 new houses over the next 17 years was appropriate. The questionnaire also asked whether housing developments should be restricted in scale to a maximum of 20 to 30 units.

Hixon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Secretary: Mrs. Catherine Gill, 79 Sycamore Drive, Hixon, Stafford ST18 0FB  
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In answer to the first question about 50 new dwellings, 61% of respondents thought a combined total of 76 already approved in New Road, plus 50 new houses, was the right amount, 26% thought this was too many and 6% thought it was too few.

When asked about the size of new housing development being limited to a maximum of 20 to 30 units, 60% thought this about right; 25% thought too many and 7% thought too few.

It is abundantly clear that the application for 50 additional new houses off Church Lane is against the wishes of the people of Hixon.

Currently permission for 131 houses in Hixon has already been given since the timeframe of the Plan for Stafford Borough began, with a further 10 officially pending a decision (though it appears as though permission may actually have been given), plus a further 9 pending off New Road, and a further 8 pending on this same site off Church Lane, plus this 50! The majority of Hixon residents have agreed to 126 maximum.

A Local Housing Needs Assessment for Hixon parish was carried out in 2011 and this showed a need for 7 affordable homes for local (Hixon parish) people - these are currently under construction by Stafford & Rural Homes/Housing Plus under the Rural Exception Housing scheme.

#### **PLAN FOR STAFFORD 2011-2031 AND HIXON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

- The site is outside the Hixon Residential Development Boundary as defined in the Stafford Borough Council Local Plan 2001
- The site is outside the well-advanced Hixon Neighbourhood Plan draft Settlement Boundary on file at Stafford Borough Council;
- Part 2 of the plan for Stafford Borough, which sets the new settlement boundaries, is also well - advanced;
- To permit the development would undermine and prejudice the outcome of the Hixon Neighbourhood Plan;
- Furthermore, any decision on this site or any other development in Hixon, will be premature ahead of the emerging Hixon Neighbourhood Plan which will cover the whole of the parish area and has been accepted by Stafford Borough Council.

Hixon is one of eleven Key Service Villages in Stafford Borough which are required to share the building of 1200 new homes between 2011 and 2031. An equal division of the 1200 new dwellings across the KSVs would mean each having to accommodate approximately 110 properties over the lifetime of the adopted Plan for Stafford period.

By population, Hixon is the sixth largest of the eleven Key Service Village, so it could be argued that Hixon should take fewer than 110; perhaps less than 100.

**Hixon already has 131 houses permitted for development.**

**The application for an additional 50 in Hixon is therefore contrary to the spirit and intentions of the adopted Plan for Stafford.**

**Crucially**

- Stafford Borough Council can demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing land, including a 20% buffer. The Plan for Stafford Borough has demonstrated that for the plan period objectively assessed need can be fully met. Although a proportion of the Borough's housing provision is required at the Key Service Villages (12%) the amount of housing currently committed at this level of the hierarchy has exceeded this proportion. The proposal would lead to a disproportion amount of development taking place at a lower level of the sustainable settlement hierarchy. This will undermine the development strategy set out in Spatial Principle 4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough. Whilst a number of other factors and consideration will need to be taken into account when determining this planning application, the planning policy advice is to refuse this proposed development.

**SITE ACCESS, HIGHWAYS AND PEDESTRIANS**

- The exit from the proposed development is on to Church Lane, which is a very well used pedestrian route for children on their way to the school further up the hill on Church Lane. The number of cars, vans, lorries etc. exiting from the combined development on this site (7, plus 30, plus these proposed 50 houses plus a further 8 pending and proposed retail units!) would make it very difficult for the children to safely cross this exit road to continue on their journey, with a high potential for an accident to occur.
- Any further developments permitted in Hixon would add to the already extremely bad traffic problems on both New Road and Church Lane at the junctions with the A51 - these traffic problems have been recognised by Highways but there are no plans currently in place to alleviate the situation.

**SITE SUITABILITY AND DESIGN**

- By its scale, the proposed development would be unsustainable in relation to the services, amenities and facilities, currently available in Hixon;
- Visual impact: this site is on a hill and would have a considerable detrimental visual effect for people walking on the footpaths on the area, when viewed from the roads and would be clearly visible from a considerable number of properties in the area, leading to a permanent detrimental visual impact for residents in these properties.
- Many aspects of this planning application are contrary to the Hixon Neighbourhood Plan; e.g. number of houses exceeds the development limit of 20 units (the development of 30 houses plus this development comes to nearly 80 houses, plus there are a further 8 houses planned on a separate application), e.g. there is an insufficient buffer zone of open space or woodland between these new houses and the existing houses.

## THE TRUTH ABOUT HIXON

- Hixon is a rural village;
- The outreach Doctor's surgery that used to be available in Hixon Memorial Hall on Tuesday and Friday mornings is currently suspended - residents have to travel to Great Haywood or beyond to access a doctor;
- Public transport in Hixon is rated by residents as 'poor or 'very poor';
- Stafford Borough Council planning reports have previously described Hixon as *"located in a peripheral location which is not well-served by public transport or the strategic highways network."*
- There is no public transport on Sundays;
- There is no public transport after 7pm on any day;
- Research shows that industrial estates around Hixon do not provide 'employment opportunities' for local residents. Over 90% of Hixon residents who travel to work or education, travel away from Hixon;
- Residents of 50 further new homes would significantly increase that statistic leading to an increasing carbon footprint and traffic congestion;
- In a Stafford Borough Council planning leaflet "Delivering the Plan for Stafford, Issues and Options" (2009) planners wrote "Although Hixon is a significant employment location, the limited provision of services and facilities may require a new village centre to be provided if major housing development occurs." This application would be a major housing development for Hixon.
- Hixon Memorial Hall is 90 years old and needs significant investment;
- St Peter's School would need to erect portable classrooms on playgrounds to meet additional schoolchildren roll numbers;
- Traffic congestion at the junction of the A51 and New Road is already excessive at peak evening times.
- Research shows that in excess of 95% of Hixon residents who travel to work do not work in Hixon and use private cars to drive their place of work. 95% of people working in Hixon travel in from areas outside Hixon, causing the bulk of the traffic problems seen on Hixon's roads.

## SUMMARY

The Government's Locality Act demands that the views of the local people are taken into account when large-scale major housing development is proposed in THEIR community.

Developers do not have the right to try and browbeat local communities into submission.

The adopted Plan for Stafford was approved by a Government Inspector and should be robustly defended so that Hixon, and other Key Service Villages, are not swamped with excessive housing developments. The Plan for Stafford is a twenty year plan with sixteen more years to go.

**The NPPF can be used to refuse this application 15/21806/OUT, it says....**

Planning permission could be refused where *“the development proposed is so substantial, or its accumulative effect would be so significant that to grant permission would undermine the plan making process by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development that are essential to an emerging Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan.”*

**This proposed development can clearly be refused on the above grounds.**

**Hixon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, on behalf of the residents of Hixon, calls for planning application 15/22017/OUT to be refused.**

Yours sincerely

Mrs. Catherine Gill

Secretary of Hixon Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group