

**Northern Area Planning Committee**  
**Written Submissions**  
**Tuesday, 16 February 2021**

**Item 5a – 2/2020/0406/OUT, Land south of Lower Road, Stalbridge, Dorset**

**Mrs June Harman – AGAINST the Application**

I am objecting to this proposal on land to the South of The Paddocks, Lower Road Stalbridge.

There are already a number of housing sites already under construction, with other applications in the pipeline.

Stalbridge is an extremely infrastructure poor, small town? We have a failing High Street, those shops no longer in used are either empty or have been changed back to residential dwellings. We have had no local G.P. for over two years, residents having to travel to nearby Milborne Port, Sturminster Newton or Sherborne surgeries. If you are not a car owner, getting there is a logistical nightmare, with a fundamental lack of public transport running at times to get you to appointments. Our one primary school is sadly lacking in capacity to accommodate a large influx of children, which will be happening as the new houses being built, have families with children moving in.

Work locally is minimal, therefore people will need to commute further afield, meaning increased traffic flow on the already, at times congested narrow roads in Stalbridge.

The current house building sites, the one off Lower Road, private housing starting prices at £325k hardly affordable for local Stalbridge residents trying to get on the housing ladder. The social housing site off Thornhill Road, although welcome, will not, as many people believe necessarily benefit locals, as these will be put out for bids for anyone from anywhere be able to access.

As regards the commercial and retail units, not a desirable place for them to be built, and once again traffic flow would increase, and noise and disruption to a new housing development would not be favourable.

Stalbridge already has huge lorries coming through, making dangerous turns on to the High Street from Station Road, a few near misses have occurred as the pavements are so narrow, pedestrians have to, at times hug the walls of buildings to escape being knocked into the road.

I would like the developers to maybe spend some time here, not just a flying visit, to see what it is like on a daily basis. Perhaps when Covid is over, and before a final decision is made, they could do just that. It's not all about money, (or maybe it is for them?!) They build and walk away; we have to live here.

Thank you

### **Jane Westbrook – AGAINST the Application**

On behalf of Dorset CPRE (Campaign for the Protection of Rural England) we object to this application as follows:

1. The A357 runs through Stalbridge and is the main route from Wincanton/A303 and on southwards. Traffic is constant with HGVs and agricultural vehicles. Due to the historic nature of the town, the roads are narrow. The crossing in the town centre is restricted in size and visibility. Approaching from Barrow Hill to A357 (Ring Street) the lane is narrow, with buildings on either side, no pavements and poor view of approaching traffic. Approaching from the A357 (Ring Street) the road is wide enough for one vehicle only - traffic queues by Dike's supermarket. Grove Lane cuts into Ring Street, with no visibility of oncoming traffic from the crossing.

Highways opinion is that "the network will continue to operate efficiently". We suggest it will become a significant road safety hazard. Highways state "there are no highway safety issues" when, in commenting for the draft Local Plan, they mention - "**road safety concerns**".

2. The applicant proposes a B1 employment site – this allows industrial processes, which would be entirely unsuitable at the heart of a residential area.

3. The applicant states the report of the Senior Landscape Officer, who does not support this application, may be "influenced by local opinion". The opinion **reflects** local opinion, which should be respected and not treated with derision. Further, it is an accepted fact that mitigation seldom fully repairs harm done to landscape.

4. DC housing enablement team have reported “housing need in the area would need to be demonstrated” and that, although there is a high level of housing need in Dorset generally, it is likely that the housing need in Stalbridge will be met by the recent and current development in the area. The applicant seeks to undermine the knowledge and experience of the DC housing team, which is disingenuous.

5. We are surprised that Highways have no concerns. If the access point to Lower Road is made safe, there is still considerable impact from **795 trips DAILY**. With no useful public transport, no doctor’s surgery, no secondary school and few retail/employment options it is unlikely that residents will choose to walk or cycle to access these facilities. Templecombe Station is 4 miles away and the A357 is busy and unsuitable for cycling. Stalbridge is “not well connected to neighbouring towns” as stated by the applicants.

6. DC has a climate emergency strategy which states that housing should **ONLY** be built where there is access to public transport, employment, schools, training and all amenities.

### **Stalbridge Town Council – AGAINST the Application**

Stalbridge Town Council consider that Agenda item 5a is being brought to the committee at the wrong time. The Dorset Local Plan is currently in the consultation process and the application in question subject to an appeal. They do not consider this to be best practice and will be considering seeking a judicial review of this process.

The proposed greenfield site, outside the established settlement boundary, forms part of the historic landscape setting of the Town within the Blackmore Vale. Members agree with the Landscape Architects position of non-support due to the cumulative adverse effect on the character of a valued landscape.

The additional vehicle and pedestrian movements from the site via difficult junctions onto the A357 will create additional hazards in terms of highways safety and ‘block’ new road connections to the south of Stalbridge to the A357.

This application combined with two recently granted major developments represents a 27% growth for the Town. This figure more than doubles the 10%

growth of the whole District over the last ten years and the planned comparable rate of growth for the period (mostly in the four main towns). This rate of growth for Stalbridge at the edge of the county is not sustainable and members agree with the inspectors view of the local plan in 2015, that large scale development sites in Stalbridge would harm the character and uniqueness of the Town.

The level of growth to date in Stalbridge already contributes to meeting the five-year land supply target, which Dorset Council is dependent on granted permissions being built out by developers. This application is not supported by a demonstrated local need, a view which is supported in The Officers report. It is therefore considered to be unsustainable and not in accordance with the adopted local plan's spatial strategy, given the towns location on the northern edge of Dorset with restricted links to larger towns via public transport and a limited local infrastructure in terms of commerce and employment.

In conclusion STC ask Committee Members to consider the Dorset Local Plans commitment to Build the Right Houses in the Right Places give due consideration to the value of the rural setting of the Town of which they are proud and respectfully ask that they do not to support the recommendation in principal.

### **Grassroots, on behalf of the Applicant**

We welcome the Officer's recommendation and hope that Members can support it, so we can work towards avoiding the Public Inquiry scheduled for the end of April.

The proposals represent the use of land to "round off" Stalbridge and provide much needed housing and employment land.

As the Council's Housing Enabling Officer notes, there are currently 1,100 households on the Dorset Home Choice register, with the SHMA indicating the need for 367 additional affordable housing units over a five-year period to meet that need.

This application proposes the delivery of 114 houses, 46 of which would be affordable. This will provide a significant boost to the Council's supply and

assist in addressing the backlog that currently exists.

Since the application was submitted, the Council's Cabinet has ratified the Dorset-wide Local Plan Options Consultation, which is now out for public consultation. The consultation document recognises that Stalbridge acts as a District Centre and places it as a Tier 2 town (on the same footing as the current "four main towns") and notes that housing need across Dorset will rise to 1,793 net additional dwellings a year (30,481 over a 17-year period). It identifies a number of sites to meet this emerging housing requirement in a sustainable way.

The application site is included as a "Preferred Site" for residential development with capacity to deliver c.150 new homes. In suggesting the site for allocation, both the principle of development and the impact on landscape was taken into account, with specific guidance on landscape matters provided within the policy wording.

While we appreciate the Dorset-wide Local Plan is at an early stage of preparation, it does indicate the direction of travel and highlights that the Council's own Officers consider the site represents an appropriate location to accommodate development needs in a sustainable manner, without leading to adverse impacts on the landscape, or the town's infrastructure. The Council's Highways Officer and Flood Risk Management Engineer have also confirmed they have no objection to the proposals.

The scheme will deliver a number of benefits, the most significant of which are:

- Increase the choice and supply of market and affordable housing, helping to reduce serious shortfall in supply in a sustainable location, thus allowing the Council to resist unsustainable development elsewhere;
- Provides a mix of uses, including employment land which will provide flexible workspaces and local jobs in the town; and
- Replaces ecologically sterile arable fields with a more biodiverse network of habitats.

We trust that Members will agree with your Planning Officer's recommendation that the public benefits associated with the delivery of much

needed open market and affordable housing, alongside job creation, weighs in favour of granting permission, and that no adverse effects that would represent reasonable reasons to refuse the application exist.

We therefore commend the application for approval to provide a much-needed boost to housing supply in the area, to provide people with the homes and jobs they needed to bounce back from the current recession.