

# Northern Area Planning Committee

16 February 2020

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

### Statement from Cllr Graham Carr-Jones

### Ward member for Stalbridge and Marnhull

Chairman, Members of Committee.

Members the in-principal decision you are being asked to take is NOT one for a planning committee!

A large Strategic site like this is one that the Community in Stalbridge should be making through their representation and feedback into the current Local Plan Consultation, our Town Council are currently working on their response to the local plan, the residents are feeding back their comments. This large-scale development is more important to the community and they would urge you to refuse this application if they could be here today.

**I would like to draw attention to the report which clearly sets out:** Stalbridge has recently taken on a housing growth in excess of the current adopted Development Plan policies.

The report states a reason this case is coming before Committee is the Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

Please let me remind Members who may not be familiar with it, that the adopted North Dorset Local Plan still carries weight, and this application is completely Contrary to

Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy

Policy 6 – Housing Distribution

Policy 20 – The Countryside And furthermore, contradicts the *Saved Policies North Dorset District Local Plan 2003- Policy 1.7 – Settlement Boundaries*

Chairman, should members require it I have **Policy 2** Extract **3.39 & 3.50** **Policy 6** Extract **5.6 and 7.27** and **Policy 20** to hand should you wish me to refer directly to them.

Policy 2 **3.39** Outside the four main towns, where access and proximity to services is more limited, development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs.

**3.50** Outside the defined boundaries of the four main towns, in the remainder of the District (including Stalbridge and all the District's villages), development will be more strictly controlled with an emphasis on meeting local and essential rural needs.

Policy 6 **5.6** *In terms of location, national policy advises that local planning authorities should actively manage growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in location, which are or can be made sustainable. It also states that in order to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.*

**7.27** All the foregoing elements support Policy 2 – Core Spatial Strategy, which seeks to concentrate development at the District's four main towns with a focus on meeting local needs elsewhere. **and**

Policy 20 Stalbridge **and the eighteen larger villages will form the focus for growth outside of the four main towns. Development in the countryside outside defined settlement boundaries will only be permitted if: a it**

*is of a type appropriate in the countryside, as set out in the relevant policies of the Local Plan, summarised in Figure 8.5; or b for any other type of development, it can be demonstrated that there is an 'overriding need' for it to be located in the countryside.*

The only reason this application is before you today is because Dorset Council are being bullied into it by the reprehensible actions of "Land Value Alliances"

Their duplicitous, guileful appeal to the Inspector, for a non-determination has our officers running ragged, and being spooked into bringing this forward in a rush to the detriment of Stalbridge & the community.

Members I could sight you 2 other applications in Marnhull that have been in the planning system for over two years!

**So, let's not be bullied.**

The riding rough shod over communities is the next hurdle.

As a Council we talk about **Sustainable development** so let me address that point:

Dorset's smallest market town, a town in name only, a town that has only 2 or 3 viable shops on the High Street, no Medical provision, and a small County Primary School with limited capacity. A town where employment opportunities are extremely limited and the work from home option severely hampered by inadequate poor broadband provision.

Leisure activities, further education and professional entertainment will always mean a car journey.

These may not be material planning considerations, but these are the things that make communities sustainable.

Both myself and The Town Council feel that the current rate of growth is not sustainable and will permanently alter the rural character of Stalbridge. Something that when the "ND Local Plan" went to inspection in March 2015 the inspector David Hogger said large scale development sites would harm the character and uniqueness of the Town.

The recently approved, adjacent sites (2/2019/0161/REM off Lower Road and 2/20019/1710/REM Thornhill Road) for 180 houses in total have already started construction with residents already living at the Lower Road development. This represents an 18% growth rate. If this application is approved **these three sites alone** will increase the size of Stalbridge by 27%. This does not take into account the extant planning applications for a further 30 or so houses dotted around the village.

To put this into context the adopted North Dorset Local Plan notes that the District as a whole has expanded by about 10% over the last ten years and planned a similar rate of growth for the plan period (with most of this growth in the four main towns).

It is worth noting, **The Dorset Council Landscape Architect - is not able to support the application due to cumulative impacts.** This greenfield site is outside the established Settlement boundary, borders footpath N51/39 and forms part of the historic landscape setting of Stalbridge. members the loss of this setting and the impact on the footpath would be a sad loss of amenity for local residents

**Moving onto the Cumulative Impact** of large-scale development

I am concerned that this application, with the two already started, that gain access via Lower Road which is a quiet road with a difficult junction onto the A357.

As a local member with 32 years of experience of the road, the extra motor traffic and pedestrians from 294 new houses will pose a significant safety hazard.

The proposed business area is not appropriate on this site because it will be surrounded by residential developments on all sides, notwithstanding the empty shops and business units that Stalbridge has.

Where an earth does this outfit do their research? Their suite in Harrow?

This speculative land banking exercise will not help our five-year land supply, (an achievement which is reliant on permissions being built out by developers).

Members as the Portfolio Holder for Housing I cannot Support this application in the ward.

It is fair to say Dorset Council is in desperate need for social housing, this comes back to the Council mantra of: **the Right Houses in the Right Places.**

Due to the existing number of extant permissions **this application does not address a demonstrated local need** and, given Stalbridge's isolated location within rural North Dorset, the limited public transport links and local infrastructure, it seeks to create a level of growth that is considered to be unsustainable and contrary to the adopted local plan's spatial strategy. 7.27

**Members our own Officers report clearly states:** Stalbridge does not have a local need of affordable housing  
**To give you context** The Lower Road site will provide 48 units of affordable Housing.

The Thornhill site is a 100% affordable scheme of 60 Housing units provided by Sovereign.

**Current numbers on the Housing Register for Stalbridge are:**

34 households with their 1<sup>st</sup> Choice being Stalbridge

17 Households with their 2<sup>nd</sup> Choice being Stalbridge

And 22 households with their 3<sup>rd</sup> choice being Stalbridge

**Only 2 Households have named Stalbridge their 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Choices**

I also understand Bovis Homes are currently looking at selling a further tranche of houses to another provider of shared ownership property because sales are slack.

I firmly believe that the current level of growth more than demonstrate Stalbridge's contribution to achieving the overall supply target for Dorset's' Northern area.

We do not wish to see Stalbridge turned into a vast ghastly housing estate, where there is little neighbour interaction and the heart and the community spirit of the town is stolen for profit.

**The applicant has not provided a 'climate implications' statement with the application, something our Local Plan Process holds in the highest regard!**

Our officer report highlights: ***Stalbridge taken housing growth in excess of the current adopted Development Plan and that planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs.*** Which I think you'll agree, this does not!

In conclusion, I and the Town Council implore you to refuse this application on grounds:

That the development proposed is so substantial, and its cumulative effect would be so significant, that to grant permission would undermine the plan-making process

Members of Committee refusing this application would make these speculators do the **right thing and bring any future proposal through the proper process of the emerging Dorset Plan**, which will establish whether it meets the council's requirement **to Build the Right Houses in the Right Places**, so I ask you to give careful thought to the preservation of the rural amenity of the smallest town in Dorset and how the Cumulative Impact of large-scale developments will decimate the character and uniqueness of our Town forever.