

From Ken Forest

Submission for Theme 1

Matter 4.13 Affordable Housing

This is a matter of major concern. The lack of provision for affordable housing in the right place and right size at the right time is driving people out of the town. This has been highlighted previously and a revised solution based on accurate and up to date data is important to aid this solution.

Matter 4.14 Specialist Housing

With an increasingly aging population and current problems with the NHS and their support organisations, together with the loss to Tamworth of the Meadowryth care facility, I have long believed and advocated a retirement complex where people can live independent lives but linked closely to support facilities. As in Lichfield, such a facility could be beneficial by freeing up under-occupied housing , help in fostering a community feeling together with benefits for safety and health. It should be noted that a very high level of mortality is experienced in the female 80 + age groups which requires investigation and action. Such new provision may well help in reducing the above average mortality rate. The facility could be located out of the town, within close proximity to a good public transport system where the more active could travel into town using their free bus passes.

Tamworth could also benefit from improving facilities for the disabled and mentally impaired potentially along similar lines. This also should be further investigated.

Matter 4.15 Regeneration Priority Areas.

These at present are Tinkers Green with over 100 dwellings with as high a level of demolitions, with some residents already having moved out under a decanting scheme. The next priority area is Kerria Centre with 44 new builds planned and 36 demolitions. It includes the loss of a community centre. As chair of a local group of residents set up to work with the council on this redevelopment we have been totally ignored contrary to guidance in the NPPF. As a result the group no longer meets and can be considered defunct. A screened fencing enclosed around private property on the site under permitted development rights has partially collapsed 3 times. Approaches to the Council for corrective action have been unsuccessful. To avoid exasperating the affordable housing crisis we sought a phased development but have not been listened to. These developments are now subject to planning applications which are expected to be determined shortly.

The third priority area is the town centre . Monitoring of planning application indicates a continuing conversion of properties into flats and apartments. I support this.

The town centre has a number of vacant upper floor commercial areas in private ownership which could possibly be brought into residential use. This would be beneficial in supplementing the need for smaller dwellings. But, to date, I have seen no evidence to demonstrate the Council is working hard to encourage this.

The proposed regeneration of the town centre appears to be lacking in speedy progress. There may well be funding problems that remain unresolved, as I indicated in my initial objections to the Local Plan in December 2014. All these areas are brownfield but do not appear to be being given the priority they deserve. Emphasis unfortunately appears to be on delivering green field sites.

It should also be noted that there appears to be in excess of 600 empty dwellings in Tamworth. I recall a Cabinet member standing up to proudly announce that 10 of these had been bought back into use with financial assistance from the Government. I have reason to suspect that this government scheme is no longer being continued. This despite the benefits accrued, which includes reducing developments green field sites and minimising help from other authorities.