

Submission for Theme 1

Matter 9 Sustainable Urban Extensions. SUEs

Whilst I have no issues broadly with the principles of SUEs, I consequently have not studied them in any depth. This is because I consider that Tamworth does and will need these within the foreseeable future. I do however have concerns. Principally traffic related, but also related to the adverse effect on biodiversity and traffic pollution.

9a Anker Valley.

Whilst the site has a potential to increase the number of dwellings, I opposed this at the last local plan enquiry because the council proposed to allow the first 250 homes to be built without a by-pass. This by-pass now stands as abandoned policy for reasons of financial practicality. The by-pass would have relied principally on developer funding which was, I remember at that time, £33 million. This was before the NDPG which strengthens developers arguments with financial concerns and site viability.

The current proposal, following approval of an outline application in 2014, is for 535 dwellings, with funding to help improve the existing highway network, in particular the Ashby Road through Fountain Junction and into town via the Upper Gungate and Aldergate. This highways work has now been undertaken and has improved peak period congestion with less delays, as observed in late April. However, the additional traffic for these 535 houses, when added to the additional 165 dwelling for Masfield Drive will increase congestion and perhaps take it over previous levels. Every day hundreds of young people walk the side paths from town to the Upper Gungate. This to the Queen Elizabeth School, The Landau Forte 6th Form College (recently built) and Tamworth College.

Having monitored and researched traffic pollution and its affects. Also having obtained a 2008 report on this issue from North Warwickshire and passed it on to Tamworth Borough Council many years ago. The results of that report conclude that frequent exposure to traffic pollution for short periods has an adverse long term effect on asthmatics and others with breathing problems, even when the pollution levels are below local action thresholds. And it should be noted that this route has the 2nd highest rated of measured pollution, already almost on the threshold levels.

Last year I noted that a young person who lived in the Spital ward (and so was likely to have walked to these schools) died following an asthma attack. My concerns in this case relate not purely to the delays caused by the congestion, but also the cumulative long term effect on the health of those who suffer from breathing problems, including hay fever and emphysema.

9b Tamworth Golf Course.

This area of land, apparently donated by the Coalfields Regeneration Project for sport and leisure purposes of local residents, so now owned by Tamworth Council, is currently subject to an 1,100 housing outline planning application. This application is controversial and will have a serious effect on the areas of Amington and Stonydelph. A significant number of vehicles from this new build will pass through the village of Amington. It was recently reported in the press that the Florendine school crossing warden is due to retire and will not be replaced. This despite concerns being registered by the school authorities and local safety groups. Having lived in the locality (until very recently) for 34 years, and having undertaken traffic surveys with residents in the early 1990s and having observed the traffic problem first hand at peak and off peak periods and seeing the cars parked in the locality during this school run period, I do support and endorse this school's concerns on safety. I conclude that the development of the golf course to the extent proposed must add to the problems in the village of Amington and along the Tamworth Road there due to increased levels of car use.

The locality is not well served by public transport, with only the 785 hourly service available on weekdays and Saturdays from Tamworth to Austrey via Birch Coppice and Polesworth (the service is not well used). The Golf Course is adjacent to Hodge Lane Nature Reserve. Badgers live on the site. There are numerous trees and the site contributes significantly to biodiversity. Whilst I accept that some development of the site may be needed I conclude that the loss of this recreational facility and locality is more likely to be influenced by the financial benefits for the Council than to meet any real Tamworth need for the housing.

(See similar case history included as an appendix.)

9c Dunstall Lane

This development concerns me due to its potential adverse effect on the character and amenity of the residents of Hopwas (Lichfield District Council). From press reports I perceive that the residents have formed a neighbourhood group to ensure that this issue is addressed. The views of this group should be respected. The impact of traffic on the Bonehill Road and the adjacent canal and flood plain also concerns me, But what is relevant is the environment and the adverse affect on biodiversity.

Back in the late 1980s I received a wildlife survey carried out by a local resident who has spent much time and effort in recording for posterity the wildlife observed on Dunstall Lane. Since then further developments have pushed back this wildlife towards Hopwas. A copy of this survey dated 1987 was passed to Staffordshire Wildlife Group and probably lost or forgotten. The survey covered the period September 1987 - May 1988 and recorded principally birds, many of which are rarely seen now or heard.

This area is still rich in biodiversity but not to the extent that was observed and recorded in that report. It is close to the canal, floodplain, and the historic Dunstall Lane which links Hopwas to Tamworth. It is a lovely lane to walk along and pleasant for the wildlife lovers to quietly walk along

and to stop and observe and to appreciate. I took my young grandson along it over 20 years ago so that he could see it and, hopefully, remember it before it was lost. The gentleman who supplied me with the survey was a keen twitcher and is probably now no longer with us. To me this area is an important part of our heritage which I would like to keep if at all possible.

I would like to request that the Inspector, if he has the time and the inclination, to walk this route from Hopwas to Tamworth on a clement day to also perceive what I value.

Note: I am very conscious of the work load pressures on the Inspector, hence this is a request and not a requirement, It should be undertaken when not under pressure or to relieve it. The total period for walking it would need to allow at least three hours.

Note: A circular route could be put together one way along Dunstall Lane to Hopwas and a return along the canal. But this would likely take longer. Should the Inspector be minded to seek a guide I would be happy to walk it with him without impairing his integrity. Lunch is available at the Tame Otter, Hopwas.

Appendix

MARION 9 B AREAS

Case History for the "Bumpy"

Land between Stonyddelph and Glascote

This land was abandoned by Staffordshire County Council as an access route from the Mercian Way to the A5 By Pass. It was sold on to Tamworth Borough Council for an undisclosed sum many years ago. It was named the Bumpy by local children because it was indeed that. The name has stuck and it has been valued by the local community.

It was at a meeting at Marmion House in 2002 when we were told by the then Leader of the Council of a suggestion that the land be developed. This was made easier by the fact that the land had never been designated as public open space, but remained designated for the abandoned Mercian Way extension (since effectively replaced by the Pennine Way road). We were told that if this land was sold to a private developer in order to provide housing (about 140 was mooted) then the money received would be beneficial to the Council in order to keep rates down (council tax). The group meeting of councillors endorsed the proposals. This quickly reached the public domain and a campaigning group was set up and a local petition was organised. This eventually resulted in the proposals being abandoned and the area being properly designated as public open space. I was part of that campaigning group committee.

This case demonstrated that council officers doing their duty to look after the financial interests of the council wield considerable influence in major decision making by councillors. The timings and actions of our current council indicates that history is being repeated.

