

**25/41516/OUT| Outline planning application with all matters reserved (except for principal means of access), for development comprising up to 480 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), specialist housing for older people (Use Class C2 or C3), medical centre/primary care hub (Use Class E) and primary school (Use Class F.1), with associated open space, landscaping and other associated works including infrastructure, earthworks and drainage.**

Land To West Of Blurtons Lane, South Of Stone Road, North of Stafford Road, Eccleshall, Stafford, Staffordshire

**Representations of CPRE Staffordshire, the countryside charity.**

CPRE Staffordshire appreciates the opportunity to comment on this planning application. We fully acknowledge the significant pressures on local authorities to maintain a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS) in accordance with national policy. However, we wish to express our serious concerns regarding this proposal on the grounds of its premature nature and its conflict with the adopted Local Plan.

**Policy context**

According to the adopted Local Plan, the site lies outside the defined settlement boundaries and is therefore contrary to Local Plan Part 1 Policies SP3 and SP7, which seek to restrict development on sites outside settlement boundaries. In addition, while the preparation of the new plan is ongoing, the Draft version indicates that the site was not identified as a priority location for housing development.

**Status of the emerging Local Plan and transitional provisions**

Work on the New Local Plan for Stafford Borough 2020-2040 has stopped following the Cabinet decision on 6 March 2025. The new Local Plan for 2025 to 2045 has begun under the updated plan-making process. It is currently in the early stages of preparation and is proceeding in accordance with the transitional provisions outlined in 'Annexe 1: Implementation' of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The plan-making process is ongoing, and some evidence and strategic decisions remain subject to review and reassessment.

Given this early stage, no weight can yet be afforded to the emerging plan in determining development proposals. To approve significant development during this interim period would risk undermining the emerging strategy and contradict the national expectation that development should follow plan-led principles. In this context, the Local Planning Authority should be allowed to complete its evidence base and prepare a coherent spatial strategy.

**Recommendation**

For the reasons stated above, CPRE Staffordshire urges the council to defer the determination of this application pending the preparation and adoption of the new local plan. The plan-making process is still underway, and decisions of this scale must be made in the context of fully assessed and scrutinised local policy and evidence. Approving such a significant development in this location would be premature and contrary to the plan-led approach required by national guidance.