

STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD
8TH January 2014
Agenda Item 6 - Application No. 13/4627C

ALTERNATIVE REPORT - Submitted by ALSAGER RESIDENTS ACTION GROUP

Executive Summary.

Alsager Residents Action Group (ARAG) has studied the Principal Planning Officer's report, and while recognising and accepting much of the great volume of detailed information, believes that there are specific examples of critically important issues which have not properly been identified and considered.

ARAG is of the opinion that when these critical issues are brought properly to the notice of the Members, of the Strategic Planning Board (SPB), that they will agree that the Recommendation to Approve is ill founded and the correct decision for this application will be to Refuse.

Before addressing the specific issues Members are advised that because of the very short timescale available to ARAG, caused by the documents being published over the Christmas and New Year holiday period, our Alternative Report is effectively your officer's published report with significant amendments and additions provided by ARAG. All of the amendments and additions are in a different typeface in order to facilitate identification of our changes to the original document and all paragraphs have been numbered to aid easy reference.

THE ISSUES:

Members will be aware that in recent months there have been Appeal Inquiries relating to sites in Alsager and that the Inspectors Decision for the Sandbach North Road, Alsager Appeal has far reaching implications for Cheshire East as a whole. But while your officer's report states very clearly the negative outcomes of that decision, specifically that we can no longer demonstrate a 5 year supply of available housing land, it fails to take advantage of the positive outcomes which very clearly benefit Cheshire East and are applicable to this application in particular.

The Inspector, Mr Phillip Major, indicated very clearly that Settlement Zone Lines (SZL) and the associated Policy PS4 of the Congleton Local Plan are: "not sufficiently directly related to housing land supply that it can be considered time expired for that purpose". Instead the Policy is "primarily aimed at countryside and Green belt protection".

These objectives are largely in conformity with the NPPF and attract "significant weight". (page19 para. 9.5.3 of ARG doc, page 68 of the SPB Reports Pack)

This critical but very positive outcome appears to have been ignored or overlooked in your officer's conclusions and subsequent recommendation.

The Inspector also memorably noted that:

“the lack of a 5 year supply of housing land does not provide an automatic ‘green light’ to planning permission.

(page 19 para. 9.5.5 of ARG doc, page 69 of the SPB Reports Pack)

This decision by Inspector, Phillip Major, provides an adequate reason for refusal of this application which carries significant weight and is provided in the ARAG document as the main reason for a Recommendation to Refuse.

(Page 36 Section 11 of ARAG document)

With regard to the **Impact on the Regeneration of the Potteries Conurbation** the officer's report expresses sympathy with the concerns of Newcastle under Lyme BC but argues that, in the absence of other grounds for objection to this scheme, it is not considered that they are sufficient in themselves to provide a sustainable reason for refusal. (Page 70 of the SPB Reports Pack)

Because of the significant weight attributed to ARAG's principal reason for refusal, described above, this argument is no longer valid and is replaced by an amendment to paragraph 9.7.3 on page 22 of the ARAG document.

The fact that the proposal, if approved, *“would undermine the strategic aim and Policy SP1 of their adopted Core Spatial Strategy and detract from the regeneration of the North Staffordshire housing market and economic base”* therefore **assumes significant weight.**

In addition, the issues of ‘Highways’ and the ‘Loss of an Important Hedge’ assume increased weight because they are both in conflict with the Cheshire East Pre-Submission Core Strategy and/or Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

The road junction of Dunnocksfold Road/Hassall Road /Church Road is identified in your Infrastructure Delivery Plan (page 23) where it is described as a ‘small junction’ that is likely to be significantly affected by the planned development in this part of Alsager. **The application site is not in the Plan and its approval will only serve to exacerbate the identified problem.**

The recognised Important Hedge, which borders the site, on the North side of Dunnocksfold Road, is recognised in the Local Plan/ Pre-Submission Core Strategy **which commits the Council to ‘retention of existing Hedges’ in Dunnocksfold Road and Hassall Road.** (Pre-Submission Core Strategy – page 229)

These cumulative reasons for refusal are given in the ARAG document at pages 36 and 37.

The full Alternative Report is attached.