

Local Plans Team
Council Offices
Codsall
South Staffordshire
WV8 1PX



dudleysouth.com
1st floor, 111a High Street, Wordsley, DY8 5QR

Dear Sir or Madam,

South Staffordshire Housing Strategy Consultation Response

I write in response to the public consultation document on South Staffordshire's Spatial Housing Strategy, as part of your Local Plan Review, to express my strong objection to green belt land neighbouring Dudley Metropolitan Borough being developed for housing and to support the community campaign against such proposals.

While your current consultation is not site specific – and South Staffordshire District Council officers have indicated that they do not expect to consider specific proposals before Autumn 2020, I am responding to your consultation because the threat to this precious green space should be lifted as soon as possible.

There is no need to build housing on Green Belt in or around Dudley Metropolitan Borough, and there is therefore no justification for releasing Green Belt land in Lawnswood, Ridgehill Woods and neighbouring areas. The substantial work done to remediate former industrial land in Dudley and across the wider Black Country means that I am confident that we have sufficient brownfield sites available to meet our housing need, and to absorb our share of overspill from the Birmingham area.

This is supported further by the work that Andy Street has done across the West Midlands conurbation to bring many more brownfield sites back into use for housing, meaning that the shortfall in available accommodation that was certainly a genuine consideration until very recently can now be addressed within the existing urban area without needing to build housing on Green Belt land in South Staffordshire.

Once this valuable Green Belt on the edge of our towns is destroyed, it would be almost impossible to restore. Lawnswood and Ridgehill are home to ancient trees, and other significant habitats, which would be lost if the area was to be identified as a site for housebuilding. The area includes sites identified within the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' Priority Habitat Inventory, as well as Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation and local Sites of Biological Importance.

Our local Green Belt acts as the lungs of the West Midlands, helping to protect air quality levels in our communities. Easy access to green space is extremely important to the health and quality of life of people in Dudley South and the loss of such amenity would have consequences for our communities that extend



for
Dudley South

Help get local people into good jobs and apprenticeships

Crack down on crime and anti-social behaviour locally

Back action to tackle illegal traveller camps on our green spaces

Work with Russells Hall to ensure highest standards of care

Make sure our schools get their fair share of extra funding

Back small businesses and local high streets



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Conservatives

Promoted by Peter Miller on behalf of Mike Wood, both of 1st Floor, 111a High Street, Wordsley, DY8 5QR.

well beyond the economic and the aesthetic. I therefore urge you to find other solutions for any housing that South Staffordshire may need, that is located alongside existing South Staffordshire communities rather than bolted onto the side of the West Midlands.

Pursuing a policy of developing new housing on current Green Belt land in areas like Lawnswood and Ridgehill would place significant additional pressure on infrastructure and public services in Wordsley, Kingswinford, Wall Heath and the wider Dudley Borough.

Congestion on A449 and A491 is already extremely heavy during peak times and extra housing on the edge of Wordsley and Kingswinford will make the problem worse, placing even greater traffic onto roads poorly-equipped to handle it. It is a major contributor to the extremely poor air quality in areas like Wordsley High Street, where cars waiting to pass along the A491 or turning towards or away from Lawnswood Road cause levels of pollution that threaten people's health.

Natural population growth and demographic changes on the western edge of Dudley Borough have led to services like GP surgeries and local schools being at full capacity. This pressure will only get worse if there was development on the scale being speculated upon on these sites, as would pressure on emergency services in Dudley – and particularly facilities at Russells Hall Hospital. Given this, it is only fair that the views and concerns of people living on the edge of Dudley Borough – whose environment, public services and transport infrastructure would be affected by any housing development on the Green Belt – should be properly considered in setting South Staffordshire's Spatial Housing Strategy. I understand that Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council has already responded formally, setting out their own concerns.

National planning law recognises that there is an infrastructure cost associated with large housing developments, which developers are usually expected to contribute towards. Where a development spans across multiple planning boundaries then the contributions are usually shared pro-rata between them. However, it is clearly the case that the pressure on infrastructure and services of any large development in Lawnswood or Ridgehill would fall overwhelmingly on communities in Dudley Borough, whereas infrastructure improvements funded through the Community Infrastructure Levy would go to South Staffordshire.

As you know, as Member of Parliament for Dudley South, I organised a public meeting earlier this year at Belle Vue Primary School in Wordsley, which was attended by the Leader of South Staffordshire District Council, the Council's Corporate Director Governance and the Council's Team Leader responsible for Local Plans. The meeting attracted so much interest – with more than 400 local people attending – that a second meeting had to be held immediately after the first. Those attending could have been left in no doubt as to the strength of local opposition to any suggestion of building on Green Belt sites in areas bordering Dudley Borough. The meeting was told that around two-thirds of all of the objections submitted during the earlier phase of the Local Plan Review related to land around Lawnswood and Ridgehill Woods.

This opposition reflects the importance of the Green Belt at Lawnswood and Ridgehill to people living in Wordsley, Kingswinford and Wall Heath. I hope that you will listen to those concerns, and to the strong arguments against building on our local Green Belt, and will agree that any housebuilding that is required should be located elsewhere.

Yours faithfully



Mike Wood

Conservative parliamentary candidate for Dudley South

