

The Plan for Stafford Borough Council Part 2

Matter 6.3 Examination – The Council’s Response to a site specific policy at Trentham Gardens

As set out in the Council’s Examination Statement Issue 6 Protected Employment Areas (P2 M6a), the strategic approach for the regeneration of the Trentham Gardens Estate was secured through the provision of two specific policies RLT9 and RLT 20 in the Stafford Borough Adopted Plan (P2 – L30). The outline planning permission that was granted in 2001 (P2 - L39) provided the overarching strategy, and included for the phased delivery of the various components for example the shops and hotel which constituted the enabling development. It was never agreed or expected that there would be further applications for enabling development which were not encompassed in the 2001 planning permission. Furthermore, an extension of time in respect of the submission of the reserved matters was approved in 2005 and again in 2006 up to 12 November 2012.

Significant re-development of the Trentham Gardens Estate has successfully taken place leading to a substantial leisure and recreation resource, indeed Trentham Leisure Ltd in their Issue 6 statement (P2- M6b) acknowledges that they receive in an excess of 3 million visitors a year. The Council considers there is no justification to include a separate site-specific policy to support any further enabling development at Trentham Estate. The English Heritage Enabling Development guidance is very clear at paragraph 5.4.4 (P2 –N20), that repeat applications for enabling developments are not acceptable. There has been no evidence provided to demonstrate why the income derived from the original 2001 planning permission (P2- L39) is insufficient to support the restoration of the remaining heritage assets. The reference to ‘historic estates’ in Enabling Development and the Conservation of Significant Places at paragraph 5.4.4 (P2- N20) is understood to relate to country estates longstanding family ownership where tackling repair and maintenance issues has to be dealt with incrementally due to the circumstances of the owner and where the aim is to maintain the integrity of the heritage asset (house, park and contents) as a single entity. Trentham does not fall into that categorisation.

New development proposals can adequately, clearly and comprehensively be addressed by the economic and environmental policies in the adopted Plan (P2-C1), taken together namely Policy E6 which supports new development by promoting enjoyment of the rich and historic natural landscape; new and existing recreational activities; preservation of attractive features; and Policy E2, which helps facilitate tourism to achieve rural sustainability. These policies conform to the NPPF and consider protecting development in Green Belt. In environmental terms, any development will need to satisfy Policies N8 and N9, which will ensure that the environment of Trentham Estate and Gardens will be protected, conserved and enhanced.