



Villagers dismayed as borough council “throws planning process under a bus”^[L]_[SEP]

KEELE, STAFFORDSHIRE February 15 2021 – Residents in two North Staffordshire villages have been shocked to discover their local council is working 'under the radar' on plans to build 1,200 houses on Green Belt land.

The revelation came after Keele and Silverdale Parish Councils applied to Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council to register a former golf course as an asset of community value (ACV). In refusing the application, the council gave as one of the reasons that the land had already been “earmarked for residential development”.

The news came as a bolt from the blue to the Save Our Green Space campaign group made up of residents in both Silverdale and Keele villages which lie either side of the old golf course. The land had been controversially allocated for possible housing in the now abandoned Joint Local Plan between Newcastle and Stoke-on-Trent.

“That plan bit the dust in early January when Newcastle and Stoke decided to go their separate ways and the borough council announced it would develop a plan of its own”, said SOGS spokesman and Keele resident John Wright.

“Work on then new plan begins with updating the local development scheme – and then the council should produce an 'issues and options' paper which then goes out to public consultation. The area is mentioned in the University Growth Corridor Masterplan but the council can't assume that aspects of that plan will be included in the new Local Plan.

“Now it transpires that someone in the council has unilaterally decided that this Green Belt land should have houses put on it, regardless of what local people think.

"We would like to know who earmarked the site for housing before the plan has been written? Where has it been earmarked and when was this decided? Is it on a map somewhere and, if it is, do our local borough representatives know about it? We have hardly started on this journey and it appears that the planning process has already been thrown under a bus.

"This is a very poor start to a borough Local Plan which will impact the health and wellbeing of thousands of residents who will want a say in it. And it is disturbing that it has only come to light through a comment in a response to a request from our Parish Council".

Mr Wright added that the pandemic has shown the importance of being able to safely access beautiful public open space.

"We think that with a little imagination, it could be a really valuable nature reserve, recreation and sports site for generations to come for the benefit of the whole community. To find out that it has already been earmarked for housing development before the Local Plan even exists shows a lack of respect for local residents."

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CONTACT - For further information please contact John V. Wright, Blue Planet Communications, 07710 454214, john@blueplanetcommunications.com

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Please note, this site is already in the Green Belt. Unveiling the Government's new housing policy on August 1st, 2020, Secretary of State for Housing Robert Jenrick MP said the plans would be a once-in-a-generation reform that lays the foundation for a better future.

"Protected land will be just that - our Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and rich heritage – will be protected as the places, views and landscapes we cherish most and passed on to the next generation as set out in our manifesto".

The Save Our Green Space action group has been formed by local people with the aim of preserving the space:

- As a community asset for future generations
- To promote physical and mental wellbeing for local people

- To keep it in the Green Belt (where it is now)