

Submission to Inspector from Save Our Greenspace

We are a local campaigning organisation set up to protect greenspace in Keele and Silverdale. We would like the following to be taken into consideration in the examination of the Newcastle under Lyme Borough's Local Plan.

Matter 2 – Are the provisions of the Plan in relation to the Spatial Strategy justified and consistent with national policy?

2.1 f) Is the approach to development at Keele soundly based? Does it adequately address the needs of the University?

We are not convinced about the capacity of Keele University to grow. The University, in common with many other Higher Education providers is struggling financially. HESA figures show no appreciable growth in the last 15 years and Keele is currently undergoing staff restructuring, including a process of voluntary redundancy and retrenchment. There seems little justification to remove land from the greenbelt as proposed with development of the KL15 site. We would point out that KL13 was allocated for development decades ago and still remains only partly occupied. It is hard to see what practical justification exists for allocating yet more land for such development.

2.2 What is the evidential basis for the settlement hierarchy in policy PSD2? Does this accurately reflect the pattern of settlements across the district? Is this up to date? How does this inform the development strategy? What other factors influenced the strategy, such as physical and environmental constraints?

2.4 Have the sites allocated for development in the Plan been appraised and selected in comparison with possible alternatives using a robust and objective process?

We have information to the effect that the value of the land of the old golf course, if sold for housing, has already been included in the boroughs budgetary planning going forwards. This presupposes the outcome of the inspection process and does not properly separate the proper function of the LPA from the boroughs ambitions as a landowner. This conflict of interests raises doubts about the motivation for the proposed housing development. It suggests that the proposals have been developed not in response to the principles of proper planning but rather for budgetary reasons. In selecting Keele Golf Course, SP11, for major development, we do not believe the Borough has properly separated its interests as a land owner from its duties as a planning authority.

Plans to develop this site for housing have been mooted for over a decade, indeed, they were the reason for the formation of our group. They predated either the current Brough Plan and its predecessor, the Joint Local Plan. They also predated any proper

consideration of available sites elsewhere, the current greenbelt study and current housing needs assessments.

Diane Smith,

Administrator,

Save Our Green Space.

30th April 2025.