

## **NUL Local Plan Examination Hearing**

### **Council's Opening Statement**

Good morning, my name is Allan Clarke and I am the Planning Policy Manager at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

On behalf of the Council, I would like to welcome the Inspector, Anne Jordan, and all those attending the examination of the Borough Local Plan.

I would like to thank at the outset, the Inspector and all involved in the development and examination of the Local Plan. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Carole Crookes, the programme officer for her management of the examination process so far.

This is an important moment for the Council and the residents and business of the borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme, and it is appreciated that stakeholders have given up their time to be involved in the Local Plan, previously through participation in consultation stages and examination hearings over the upcoming days and weeks. We thank the people of the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme for their participation in the development of this Local Plan. The Plan, if adopted, will provide a key strategy document for the Council to ensure that planning decisions are genuinely plan-led against a suite of up-to-date policies.

The Final Draft Local Plan is a culmination of a significant amount of detailed work supported by public consultation. Work on the plan commenced some 4 years ago, in 2021. The Plan is intended to set out a strategy for meeting the Borough's development needs up to 2040.

National guidance identifies the importance of having an up-to-date and relevant Local Plan. We recognise in Newcastle-under-Lyme, the particular importance of having such a Plan in place. Our existing planning policy is becoming dated, with the last adopted Borough Plan (the Joint Core Strategy with Stoke-on-Trent City Council) having been adopted in 2009. The Borough has changed in many ways since then. We have seen changes in people's lifestyles and the way we work and business is done. We need to ensure our new planning policy reflects the way we live today and are likely to in the future.

National planning guidance continues to change too. This Local Plan is being examined under the December 2023 National Planning Policy Framework in line with the transitional arrangements set out in the most recent December 2024 Framework. We accept that the government has set new housing requirements in the December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework and stakeholders in this examination will be putting forward the case that we should be planning for the higher housing numbers now, in this Plan. However, we are committed to producing a local plan update and have, separately to this examination, set out a timetable for doing so. In our view, it is important to

proceed with progressing this Local Plan now and then start work on the next Local Plan to respond to the requirements of the updated Framework. The alternative is a potentially lengthy period of “planning by appeal” which does not, in the Council's view, lead to the delivery of sustainable and plan-led development and positive outcomes for the borough.

The Plan before this examination will secure substantial new housing and employment allocations, supported by updated planning policies in the Borough. All this will help to ensure a Plan-led approach and improved housing land supply position, providing for a stable planning and decision-making environment, whilst a new local plan is being prepared.

The local plan has been through several consultation stages involving local people, businesses, community groups and external stakeholders. Together with a robust and proportionate evidence base we consider that we have taken a sound approach to preparing a deliverable local plan.

The Local Plan cannot address everyone’s concerns. Some will say that the Plan does not plan for enough growth, others will say that we have planned for too much growth. In the Council’s judgment, we have taken difficult decisions to ensure a balanced approach to sustainable growth, supported by appropriate infrastructure and recognising environmental considerations also.

To conclude, the Council considers that the Local Plan provides for a sound and positive strategy for achieving sustainable development. We therefore welcome this public examination.