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**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION**

**HEARING SESSION – MATTER 6 GREEN BELT**

**ON BEHALF OF MR M. STEPHENS (AGT24-002-03-01, 02 and 03)**

**Matter 6 – Green Belt**

**Whether the Plan's approach to Green Belt is positively prepared, justified and consistent with national policy?**

**Questions**

**Q3 and Q4.** The Green Belt Study confirmed that Site 119b immediately to the north-west of Site 119a makes 'weak/no contribution' to the five purposes of the Green Belt and it is assessed that its development would represent 'low/moderate harm': The land is also assessed as having low landscape sensitivity. It can therefore be seen that Site 119b represents a logical and appropriate rounding-off opportunity that would merely consolidate the urban area in this location, without significant harm to Green Belt purposes or the wider landscape.

The strong evidence to support its allocation (or safeguarding) as an extension to Site 119a has, however, been discounted due to 'initial concerns' expressed by the highway authority at a very early stage in the plan-making process, that are not substantiated with any evidence; and which in any event, could be mitigated.

**Q5.** The Council has demonstrated that there are exceptional circumstances to alter Green Belt in the district, which is predominantly Green Belt, in order to deliver its own housing needs, not to mention those of the adjoining West Midlands conurbation.

**Q6.** There may be exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green belt land for development in Tier 2 and Tier 3 settlements, but this should not at the omission of sustainable and appropriate opportunities in Tier 1 settlements such as Cheslyn Hay.

**Q8.** The open north-western boundary to Site 119a is clearly defined by a stream, but there is no doubt that extending the allocation to include Site 119b would represent a logical consolidation of the urban area of the north side of Saredon Road, to even stronger and more well-defined boundaries.

**Q10.** In the light of the impending Local Authority Devolution and the likely merging of South Staffordshire District Council with other nearby authorities, there is a very real prospect of delay in progressing any subsequent local plan review, due to administrative and political reorganisation.

The new NPPF requires significantly more land to be identified for development in any future new plan and it is inevitable that Tier 1 settlements will remain highly sustainable options for growth, as part of any future spatial strategy. It is also inevitable that any future development will require additional Green Belt release.

The Government is also keen to promote its growth agenda and so it would appear to be both appropriate and expedient for this Plan to identify safeguarded land (since all the existing supply is now to be allocated/developed) to assist in maintaining an appropriate supply of land that could come forward as part of the next plan or in the meantime, in the event that it is delayed.

In such circumstances, we commend Site 119b as a logical safeguarded designation, in the event that it is not subsequently allocated for housing in this Plan.

**A J Williams** Dip TP, MRTPI

**Director**