

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council



Stafford Borough New Local Plan 2025 - 2045 Scoping the Issues and Early Participation

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council - Consultation Response

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council supports the preparation of a new Local Plan that delivers sustainable growth, meets objectively assessed housing needs and ensures that development is supported by timely investment in infrastructure, community facilities and environmental protection. The Parish Council's comments are intended to assist the Borough Council in preparing a sound and deliverable Local Plan.

The Parish Council supports the preparation of a Local Plan that is positively prepared, justified by proportionate evidence, effective and consistent with national planning policy.

1. Theme 7 – Meeting our Housing Needs and Delivering the Right Type of Housing – What type of homes do we need and where do we need them?

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council supports the principle that housing provision should be based upon robust, up-to-date evidence of local need. The Local Plan should be informed by detailed housing needs assessments at parish or settlement level, recognising that the needs of individual rural communities vary significantly across the Borough.

Evidence should identify:

- the mix of housing sizes, design and tenure requirements;
- the need for affordable housing, including homes for local people and first-time buyers;
- accommodation for older residents wishing to downsize whilst remaining connected to their community;
- housing to support local employment opportunities; and
- the capacity of local infrastructure and environmental constraints.

Housing growth should be directed to the most sustainable locations, taking account of access to employment, education, healthcare, public transport, community facilities and the ability of existing infrastructure to accommodate development.

2. Should housing be delivered in one phase or progressively?

The Parish Council considers that housing delivery must be coordinated with the provision of supporting infrastructure. Essential infrastructure should be delivered in step with the phasing of housing development, with clear triggers to ensure that capacity is available when required.

The Local Plan should require the timely delivery of:

- primary healthcare capacity;
- school places;
- highway improvements and road safety measures;
- public transport and active travel links;
- water supply and wastewater infrastructure;
- electricity and digital communications infrastructure; and
- community facilities, recreation and open space.

Healthcare infrastructure must be treated as critical infrastructure within the Local Plan. Evidence published by the NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board demonstrates that primary care services continue to face workforce and capacity challenges whilst responding to increasing demand. The Parish Council considers that all significant housing allocations should be accompanied by an assessment of primary healthcare capacity undertaken in consultation with the Integrated Care Board. Where additional demand cannot be accommodated within existing facilities, appropriate mitigation, including developer contributions towards expanded GP and community healthcare facilities, should be secured before development proceeds.

Stafford Borough has an older-than-average population in many of its rural communities. Villages such as Yarnfield and Cold Meece have a higher proportion of retired residents and an increasing number of residents wishing to remain in their homes as they age. Coupled with this there are fewer working-age adults than in urban areas.

Future housing growth must be planned alongside demographic evidence to ensure that healthcare infrastructure is capable of meeting both the needs of existing residents and the additional demand arising from new development. Housing allocations should therefore be informed not only by projected population growth but also by the changing age profile of the Borough.

Providing appropriate housing for older people can deliver significant social and housing benefits. Enabling residents to downsize within their local community allows them to maintain established family, friendship and support networks, which can contribute to improved wellbeing and independence. It also helps release larger family homes back onto the housing market, making more efficient use of the Borough's existing housing stock. This, in turn, can create opportunities for younger families to

remain in or move into rural communities, supporting balanced and sustainable communities, local schools, businesses and community organisations.

The Parish Council has experienced increasing pressure on local infrastructure arising from recent development. Future growth must therefore be genuinely infrastructure-led, with clear delivery milestones agreed before development proceeds.

The Local Plan should encourage the use of restrictive conditions to secure the timely provision of healthcare facilities, highway improvements, drainage and wastewater capacity, utilities and other essential infrastructure where these are required to make development acceptable in planning terms.

The Parish Council believes the use of such planning conditions is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

3. Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)

The Borough Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan should identify the infrastructure required to support each strategic allocation, the organisations responsible for delivery, funding mechanisms, delivery timescales and any infrastructure deficits. Housing allocations should be aligned with the delivery of infrastructure identified within the IDP.

4. Should more housing be delivered on smaller sites?

The Parish Council recognises that small sites can contribute positively by providing opportunities for local builders, increasing housing choice and delivering modest growth within existing settlements.

The Parish Council supports a balanced portfolio of housing sites across Stafford Borough. Whilst small and medium-sized sites can make an important contribution to housing delivery they are unlikely to meet the Borough's housing requirement in isolation. Unlike larger strategic allocations, dispersed small developments often do not generate sufficient developer contributions to fund the infrastructure improvements needed to mitigate their impacts.

The cumulative impact of numerous small developments should not be underestimated. Individually, such developments may appear acceptable, but collectively they can place significant pressure on:

- local roads and highway safety;
- primary healthcare services;
- school capacity;
- drainage and sewerage systems;
- utilities and digital infrastructure; and
- community facilities.

The Parish Council believes that the new Local Plan should be founded on the principle of infrastructure-led development. Housing numbers should not be considered in

isolation but should be planned alongside the services, facilities and utilities necessary to create sustainable communities.

The Local Plan should therefore ensure that housing growth is planned alongside infrastructure investment and that the cumulative impacts of multiple small developments are properly assessed. Strategic allocations should only be supported where the necessary infrastructure can be delivered in a timely manner, whilst smaller sites should be directed to sustainable locations where existing services have capacity or can be enhanced.

The Local Plan should include a methodology for assessing the cumulative impacts of multiple small developments on highways, education, healthcare, utilities and environmental infrastructure, rather than assessing each proposal in isolation.

5. Traffic and Transport - HS2

The Local Plan evidence base should be updated to reflect the cancellation of HS2 Phase 2a. References to the scheme as a future transport benefit should be reviewed to ensure that transport, infrastructure and site allocation assumptions remain current and evidence-based.

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council believes that the cancellation of HS2 Phase 2a has altered the planning context for parts of Stafford Borough. The Council should review the evidence base to determine whether former HS2 safeguarding or associated land ownership continues to constrain the delivery of housing or infrastructure. Any assumptions regarding site availability, infrastructure provision or development capacity that were influenced by the HS2 proposals should be revisited to ensure that the Local Plan is based on current circumstances and realistic delivery assumptions.

6. Engagement

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council welcomes the opportunity for Parish Councils to be involved in the process of preparing the Local Plan.

The ongoing Local Government Reorganisation in Staffordshire should not reduce opportunities for meaningful engagement with Parish Councils during the preparation of the Local Plan. The Council considers that effective engagement will be particularly important during this period of institutional change to ensure that local knowledge continues to inform planning decisions.

There should be a clear audit trail demonstrating how consultation responses have influenced policy development.

7. Monitoring

The Local Plan should include clear monitoring indicators for housing delivery, affordable housing, infrastructure provision and healthcare capacity so that the effectiveness of policies can be reviewed throughout the plan period.

8. Summary of Recommendations

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council supports the preparation of a positively prepared, evidence-based and deliverable Local Plan. To achieve this, the Parish Council recommends that Stafford Borough Council:

1. **Prepare detailed parish and settlement-level housing needs assessments** to ensure that housing allocations reflect local demographic, economic and community needs rather than relying solely on borough-wide evidence.
2. **Adopt an infrastructure-led approach to housing delivery**, ensuring that homes are delivered alongside the healthcare, education, transport, utilities and community infrastructure required to support sustainable communities.
3. **Strengthen the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)** by identifying the infrastructure required for each allocation, the organisations responsible for delivery, funding mechanisms, delivery timescales and any infrastructure deficits.
4. **Work closely with the NHS Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board** to assess the capacity of primary healthcare services before allocating major housing sites and secure appropriate mitigation where additional demand is identified.
5. **Plan for demographic change**, recognising the implications of an ageing population for housing provision, healthcare services and social care, whilst encouraging housing that enables older residents to downsize locally and releases larger family homes for younger households.
6. **Provide a balanced portfolio of housing sites**, recognising that whilst small and medium-sized sites make an important contribution, they are unlikely to meet the Borough's housing requirement in isolation and should not result in unacceptable cumulative impacts on rural communities.
7. **Assess the cumulative impacts of multiple small developments**, particularly on highways, healthcare, education, drainage, utilities and community facilities, rather than considering each proposal in isolation.
8. **Support the use of appropriately drafted planning conditions and planning obligations** to ensure that essential infrastructure is delivered in step with development and before additional demand is placed on existing services.
9. **Review the Local Plan evidence base following the cancellation of HS2 Phase 2a**, ensuring that assumptions regarding transport, infrastructure, land availability and site deliverability reflect current circumstances.
10. **Maintain meaningful engagement with parish councils throughout the Local Plan process and during Local Government Reorganisation**, ensuring that local knowledge continues to inform policy development and that there is a clear audit trail demonstrating how consultation responses have influenced the Plan.

11. **Monitor the implementation of the Local Plan** through clear indicators covering housing delivery, affordable housing provision, infrastructure delivery, healthcare capacity and the effectiveness of mitigation measures, with policies reviewed where monitoring identifies significant shortfalls.

The Parish Council believes that these recommendations will help ensure that the Stafford Borough Local Plan is positively prepared, justified by robust evidence, effective in delivery and consistent with national planning policy, whilst supporting sustainable and resilient communities across the Borough.

John Fraser
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