

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council

Planning Application 26/41933/FUL

Land at Yarnfield Park

Construction of 38 affordable homes, new access off Hayeswater Grove, landscaping and associated works.

Executive Summary

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council supports the principle of redeveloping this previously developed site for residential use and recognises the important contribution that affordable housing can make towards meeting housing needs.

However, the Council considers that Planning Application 26/41933/FUL, in its current form, fails to demonstrate that the proposed development represents the most appropriate form of development for the site or the parish.

The Parish Council believes that a revised proposal with a reduced number of dwellings, a more balanced housing tenure, stronger evidence of local housing need, and enhanced planning obligations would better reflect the character of Yarnfield and Cold Meece and provide a more sustainable form of development.

Recommendation: The Council therefore requests that the application is refused and the applicant be encouraged to amend their proposals.

The principal grounds of objection:

- Overdevelopment of the site – The proposal for 38 dwellings exceeds the indicative capacity of approximately 30 dwellings identified through the emerging Neighbourhood Plan and Design Code by more than 25%, without providing a robust planning justification for the increased density.
- Failure to deliver a mixed and balanced community – The proposal comprises 100% affordable housing and does not provide an appropriate balance of affordable rented, affordable home ownership and market housing. This is inconsistent with the evidence contained within the Parish Housing Needs Assessment, which identifies the need for a balanced housing mix rather than a single tenure development.
- Limited access to essential services – Whilst the Planning Statement highlights the availability of local facilities and an hourly bus service, it presents an incomplete picture of accessibility. Future residents would continue to rely heavily on private cars to access healthcare, supermarkets, employment, secondary education and many other essential services. This is particularly significant for occupants of affordable housing, who are statistically less likely to have access to multiple vehicles.
- Need for stronger planning obligations – Should planning permission be granted, the council considers that a Section 106 Agreement should secure a Local Lettings Plan giving priority to households with a local connection, together with financial contributions towards outdoor sports and recreation facilities to mitigate the impact of the development on community infrastructure.

- Construction and site management – Appropriate planning conditions should secure a comprehensive Construction Environmental Management Plan, together with controls over construction traffic, highway cleanliness and protection of nearby residents, Springfields First School and other sensitive receptors.

Reasons for the Parish Council's recommendation to refuse the application

1. Density - No real justification for 38 dwellings

The Planning Statement explains what is proposed but provides very little explanation of why 38 homes is the correct number. It describes the design concept and house types but does not demonstrate why this density is preferable to a lower-density scheme.

The applicant is using the fact that the development will be 100% affordable homes to justify a higher density than would otherwise be acceptable.

The Parish Council's emerging Neighbourhood Plan and associated Design Code indicate the site capacity is around 30 dwellings. The planning application, if approved, would represent an increase of over 25% above the indicative capacity.

The Planning Statement argues that the proposal should be approved because Stafford Borough has a shortfall in housing land supply and because the site will provide 38 affordable homes. It does not explain why 38 affordable homes is the right mix for Yarnfield and Cold Meece's specific needs, as opposed to meeting wider borough needs.

The application fails to put forward a development that is:

- Appropriate to the scale of the parish
- Well-designed
- Respectful of local character
- Inappropriate Tenure Split

2. Mixed and Balanced community

The NPPF encourages planning authorities to create mixed and balanced communities with a variety of housing tenures and types. In this respect the proposal:

- Does not create a balanced tenure mix;
- Concentrates one form of housing;
- Fails to provide any market housing;
- The applicant has not demonstrated why a mixed-tenure scheme would be inappropriate.

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Neighbourhood Plan Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) prepared by AECOM, sets out the estimated housing need for the period 2022–2040 is 108 additional dwellings.

The HNA recognises there is an "oversupply" of affordable housing in the parish. The HNA envisages that the parish's future housing need will be met through a combination

of affordable rented, affordable home ownership and open market housing, not exclusively through affordable housing.

Yarnfield Park development [09/12911/OUT] - Stafford Borough Council, recognising the level of local demand for affordable housing and the oversupply in the parish, did not take the full potential of affordable housing that would be generated by the development but instead took a proportion as a commuted sum.

The latest NPPF and the revised Standard Method are likely to make the HNA understate overall housing need in the parish, but they do not undermine its conclusions about the type of housing the parish needs.

The planning application fails to create a balanced and mixed community and does not meet the overall housing needs of the parish.

The development of a 100% affordable housing scheme:

- Is not the most appropriate response to the parish's housing needs;
- The omission of any market housing is not consistent with the HNA's evidence that there is also a continuing need for open market homes.

3. Local connection to services and transport

The Planning Statement sets out the range of local services and public transport running to and from Yarnfield. But in doing so it fails to reflect the reality of what is available, which will be particularly important to low-income and working families.

While there is a bus service, the frequency of the service and cost of transport will drive up dependency on car ownership as the way of accessing essential services in Stone and beyond.

There is no health services or shop that would cater for a family's weekly shop. The public transport cannot support a working family without a car. It costs £6 to make the round trip from Yarnfield to Stone and back, before adding in the cost of any onward travel to services or employment in Stafford or Stoke on Trent. With one bus per hour, this is simply insufficient to support commuting to areas such as Stafford and Stoke on Trent where there are greater employment opportunities. As an example, the time taken to get from Hayeswater Grove to the County Hospital in Stafford by bus is over 2 hours.

4. Allocation policy

The Parish Council believes it is essential that the Section 106 Agreement includes a Local Lettings Plan. The purpose of the Plan should be to ensure that the affordable homes primarily meet the needs of households with a strong local connection to Yarnfield and Cold Meece before being offered elsewhere in Stafford Borough. A nomination cascade should therefore be established, giving priority to:

- (1) households with a local connection to Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish;
- (2) households from adjoining parishes; and
- (3) other eligible households within Stafford Borough.

This approach would ensure the development contributes directly to meeting the housing needs of the parish and supports the long-term sustainability of the local community.

5. Section 106 Obligation – Outdoor Sports and Recreation Provision

The Parish Council requests that, should planning permission be granted, the Section 106 Agreement includes a financial contribution towards the provision of outdoor sports and recreational facilities within the parish.

The proposed development will increase demand for outdoor recreation, organised sport and informal open space. To mitigate this additional demand, the Parish Council considers that a contribution should be secured to support the acquisition of the Yarnfield Park football ground for community ownership and its long-term improvement as a publicly accessible sports and recreation facility.

The acquisition of the football ground would provide significant community benefits by safeguarding an established sports facility, expanding opportunities for participation in sport and physical activity, and ensuring that the additional recreational demand arising from the development can be accommodated locally.

The Parish Council therefore requests that Stafford Borough Council, in consultation with the applicant, assesses the need for an outdoor sports contribution to secure an appropriate financial contribution through the Section 106 Agreement. The contribution should be ring-fenced for the acquisition, enhancement and long-term community use of the Yarnfield Park football ground or other outdoor sports facilities within the parish.

6. Construction Noise and Dust Mitigation

Should planning permission be granted, the Parish Council requests that a comprehensive Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is secured by planning condition before development commences.

The CEMP should include measures to minimise the impact of noise, vibration, dust and air pollution on nearby sensitive receptors, including existing residents, Yarnfield Park Conference Centre, Springfields First School and users of the surrounding public highway and public rights of way.

As a minimum, the Plan should provide for:

- Restrictions on construction working hours.
- Dust suppression measures, including damping down of exposed surfaces, wheel washing facilities and road sweeping.
- Temporary acoustic screening where necessary.
- Continuous monitoring of noise and dust where works are undertaken close to sensitive receptors.
- A named community liaison officer and a clear complaints procedure.
- Regular reporting to Stafford Borough Council to demonstrate compliance with the approved mitigation measures.

The Parish Council considers these measures necessary to ensure that the amenity of nearby residents and other sensitive receptors is protected throughout the construction phase.

7. Site management and access

There is very limited access to the construction site. The management of vehicle movements to and from the site should be strictly controlled and agreed with Stafford Borough Council.

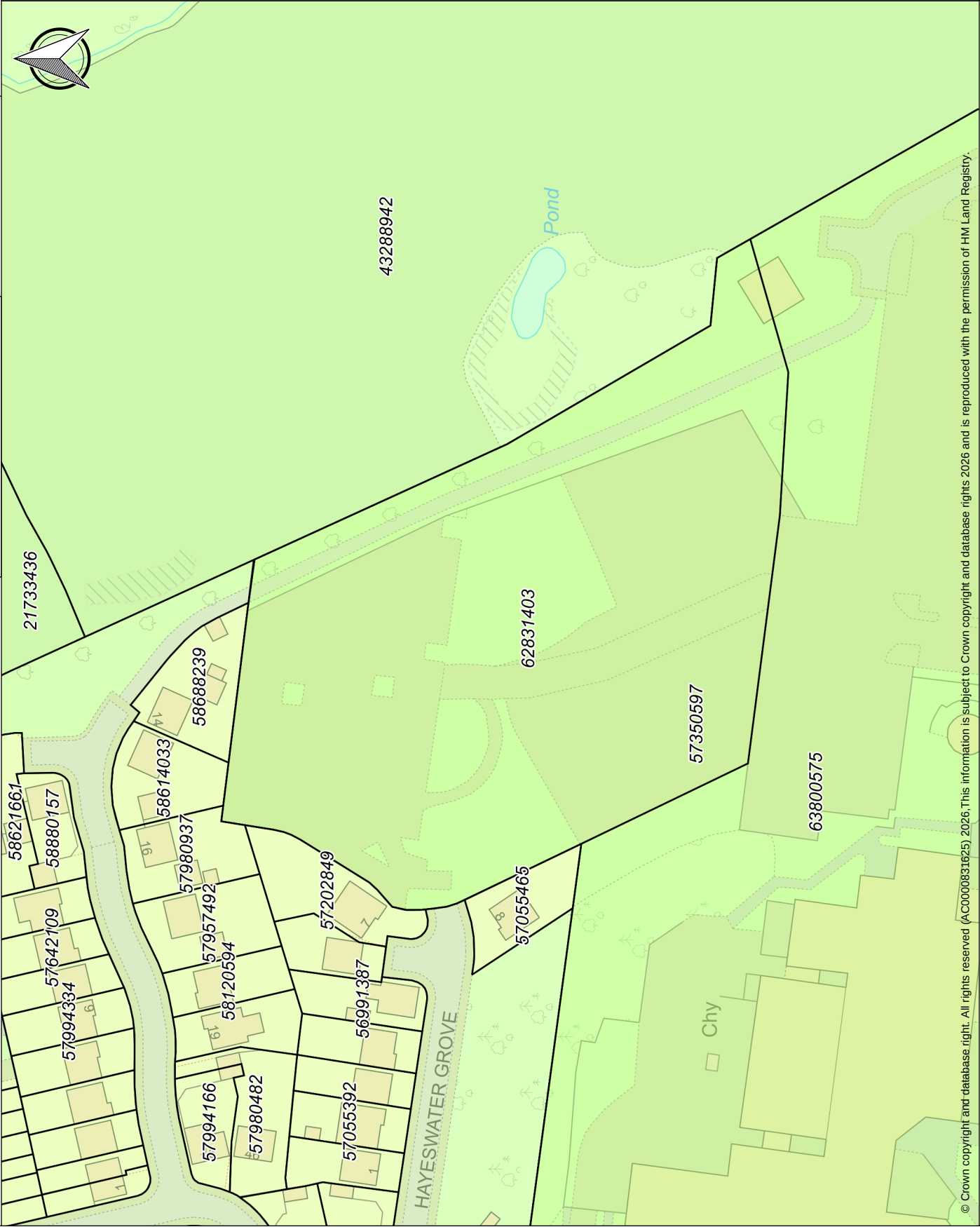
- Regular road sweeping of Hayeswater Grove and Yarnfield Parkway should be undertaken.
- Heavy goods vehicle movements should be controlled to avoid Springfields First School drop-off and pick-up times.

8. Service Road

The Parish Council notes that the site location plan for the proposed development and the freehold boundary of the applicant's ownership is not identical. [Land Registry plan attached]

If the application is approved and prior to the commencement of development, the applicant must submit as part of the Comprehensive Management and Maintenance Plan an assurance that:

- The service road remains fully open and accessible to the public at all times.
- The applicant retains full liability for the upkeep and safety of the road during all phases of construction.
- A designated managing agent will take over the long-term maintenance and public access management in perpetuity upon completion of the development.



Cadastral Parcels

