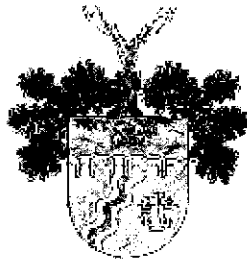


Colwich Parish Council

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Mr. Stephen Pratt BA (Hons) MRTPI
The Planning Inspectorate
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BS1 6PN

21st November 2013

Dear Mr. Pratt,

PLAN FOR STAFFORD

I am aware that you have now conducted the examination of the Stafford Plan and are considering your findings before writing to the Borough Council with your observations. Colwich Parish Council were unaware of the date of your examination and so were unable to make representations at the time. Regrettably, this is an example of the ongoing pattern with regards the development of this plan.

Colwich Parish Council, at its Policy and Resources Committee of 14th November 2013, resolved that it wished me, as the Clerk to the Council, to contact you with its thoughts on the plan. The Council is concerned that Great Haywood and Colwich/Little Haywood are designated as two of the Key Service Villages (KSV). This designation is not supported by the level of amenities in the parish. Furthermore, that the inclusion of a global figure of houses to be built in the KSVs prevents parish councils from adequately developing their Neighbourhood Plans.

In July 2013 I wrote to the Borough Council asking that the artificial divide splitting the parish in two be removed and that the built up area of the parish be considered as one. I also asked for a review of the KSV status of this area given that within Colwich, Little Haywood and Great Haywood the level of amenities are dropping steadily. In recent months we have seen one of our public houses close with a successful application to convert it, and its associated car park, into 4 dwellings. The only local shop in Little Haywood has recently been successful in its planning application to convert back to a dwelling. The Borough Council are currently considering an application to close the Elm Business Centre and convert this into 14 dwellings. The three primary schools in the main part of the parish are either close to capacity or have very little scope for additional pupils. St John's school for instance only has four classrooms meaning that the nursery/reception class share a room as do years 1&2; years 3&4 and years 5&6. Amenities are closing, the small employment zone is under threat and there is little to no

capacity in our primary schools. Yet we are expected to accept the parish being split and having to accept TWO KSV allocations. The response from the Borough Council, received on 1st August 2013, was "the Borough Council went out to consultation on The Plan for Stafford Borough etc. in June last year... This was the opportunity to raise this matter for consideration." "As such, your request comes too late for inclusion in what will be submitted for examination in public later this year." Colwich Parish Council suggests that this is a very top down controlling attitude and shows little respect to the needs of residents in Colwich.

The Borough Council claims that it has included a global allocation for the KSVs so as to allow the parishes an opportunity to decide housing needs and their location. You will be aware that the Plan for Stafford explores the sites for housing and other development in some depth for Stafford and Stone but is blank for the rural areas. Colwich Parish Council would suggest that rather than being a charter for localism this is, in fact, a charter for speculative developers to build what they want where they want. These developers have no regards for the needs or desires of residents in Colwich, or the other KSV Parishes.

Colwich Parish Council suggests that the Borough Council should have opened negotiations with the Parish Councils concerned earlier in the process so as to allocate set numbers of houses to each location based on size of population and amenities available e.g. Eccleshall has a good size shopping area and nearby trading estate, whilst Barlaston and Tittensor have easy access to employment both locally and within the Stoke on Trent conurbation. It would then be for the individual Parish Councils to allocate sites for housing development within their neighbourhood plans. Each village could expect to have to allocate sites for 60-70 houses over the lifetime of their neighbourhood plans. The five year land bank for this portion of Spatial Principle 4 would be about 250 houses (including the buffer and any portion of the 2006-2013 shortfall). Unfortunately, the way the Plan has been drawn up means that it is developers who are deciding how many houses each village will get and where these will be located. The Borough Council has already received and approved applications totaling more than half of the 629 KSV dwellings this year, not including the developments within Creswell Parish nor those in Ingestre with Tixall Parish.

The Borough Council has shown itself to be inflexible to the changing landscape of the rural areas. The Local part of the Local Plan is simply not there. Colwich Parish Council is not asking that the Plan for Stafford be rejected. Rather, it is asking that the Plan be fit for purpose and represents the needs and aspirations of the residents of Stafford Borough and not the needs and aspirations of developers. We would urge you to ask the Borough Council to look again at apportioning the KSV allocation to the villages rather than retaining a meaningless global figure. Moreover, we would ask you to urge the Borough Council to reconsider the Key Service Village status within Colwich Parish.

Yours sincerely



Michael Lennon