

CRESWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Registration No. PZ7347355 – Data Protection – Freedom of Information Act 2000

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Date 27th March 2014.

Mr. J. Holmes,
Development Manager
Stafford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Riverside
STAFFORD
ST16 3AQ

Local Plan (Main Modifications) Comments logged via the online Portal

Dear Mr. Holmes,

I write on behalf of Creswell Parish Council to share with you some information which has come to light over the last few days, now that the period for public consultation on the latest stage of the Stafford Local Plan has closed, in case you yourself are not aware of the points we are about to raise.

The deadline for representations to be received by the Council was – very clear and unambiguous – **12 noon on Thursday 20 March 2014**.

We note that: -

That each representation is logged and recorded individually upon receipt and tagged with its unique Date and Time stamp – and we have checked our own submissions and all is well.

Representations logged as numbers **106 through 165 inclusive** however are all **time stamped after** the noon deadline on Thursday 20th March.

Furthermore: -

Representations logged as numbers **166 through 217 inclusive** are all **date stamped after** the closing date (20th March), with the date of 21st March 2014.

Had there just been a few ‘late’ representations, this would not have greatly concerned us.

However, **x52** are late (same day, but after 12 noon) whilst a further **x60** are a whole day late.

112 of the **217**, total, Representation are logged after the official closing time: -;

which is **51.61% of the total.**

Creswell Parish Council felt that this had to be brought to you attention, lest the legality of the entire Consultation Process be brought into question.

Furthermore, there is a reason why this came to our attention in the first place and, again, it is something which – if you are not already aware of – might also merit your attention: -

In the range of comments from **90 through to 213**, there runs a common theme in which **x40** of these comments are quite noticeably on a common theme with the majority using, if not identical, then near identical wording.

The essence of which is: -

“I approve of the modifications and urge approval of the Local Plan as modified. Parish Councils DID have the right to take part in discussions but few chose so to do--not the fault of the Inspector or Stafford Borough Council that these Parish Councils did not take their opportunity to attend.”

This example taken, verbatim, from Representation number 211.

Whilst we ourselves have no particular concern in this regard – having attended, as you will be aware, the majority of the Examination Sessions – it does seem that there may have been some ‘orchestrated’ action that then resulted in the sudden arrival of so many near-identical responses.

x12 responses pre-noon on the final day
x24 responses after the noon deadline
x 4 responses on the following day (21st March).

We draw this to your attention as an incidental to our main observation of late acceptance of representations but nonetheless with the thought / concern that such a number of ‘organised’ common responses should not affect the legality of the Consultation itself.

No doubt you will wish to make your own enquiries and investigations into the matters we have referred to but, having done so, my Parish Council would appreciate

a formal response outlining your findings and any conclusions that might be drawn from those findings.

We also feel, that to preserve openness and transparency both this letter and your subsequent response should be made available to the independent Inspector. We are sure that you will concur with that request.

Finally we trust that you are content that we should have brought these matters to your attention in this way and at the earliest opportunity

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Horritt (Mrs)
Clerk to Creswell Parish Council

Postscript: -

There is now a further entry, number 218: - Date Stamped: **25th March 13:05**