

Written submission from Cllr Rupert Frost, Staverton, Daventry

Matter 1 - Legal Compliance and the Duty to Co-operate

Has the Plan been prepared with due regard to the appropriate procedures and regulations? Has the duty to co-operate on strategic matters been satisfied?

The Plan has not been prepared in accordance with statutory procedures. Paragraph 3.2.6 of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) confirms the Council's statutory duty (Localism Act 2011) to "engage constructively and actively with other local authorities and other bodies set out in the regulations":

We do not know if villages which were correctly classified in the settlement hierarchy were properly consulted with, but we do know that Badby, Boughton, Pitsford and Staverton were not. This is evidenced by their parish councils being generally unaware of the process, of the opportunity to comment on their hierarchy status and of the need to do so during the early stages of the consultation. The result is four communities which realised that they had been wrongly classified as secondary service villages but which did so too late to influence a correction.

The Council has not engaged constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis with relevant organisations on strategic matters of relevance to the plan's preparation, as required and stated in paragraph 3.2.11 Statement of Community Involvement (SCI):

Staverton's amenities are limited to a Public House, a Primary School and a Village Hall, none of which are under threat. It also has a small play/sports area. All day to day needs are met by Daventry i.e. Secondary Schools, GP Surgery, Shops, Post Office, and employment opportunities.

There is very small employment provision provided by the presence of a handful of small businesses. There are no safe walking or cycle routes to the outlying employment provision. Despite being referred to as having a daily bus service, Staverton has none so residents rely on private transport for travel to work, shops, doctors etc. Within the emerging Local Plan part 2, Staverton is listed as a secondary service village, but the assumptions that led to this are mostly incorrect or inaccurate.

The people of Staverton realised this during the draft consultation phase and 90 of them wrote to Daventry Council in January 2018 to explain in detail why Staverton should be placed in the "Other Villages" category. They only found out that they had been unsuccessful once the minutes of the Strategy Group meeting on 5th July 2018 were published, the decision ratified at the subsequent main Council meeting.

Thus Daventry Council failed in its duty to cooperate, relying instead on the ambivalent response of the local Parish Council which has since tried to correct matters by writing to the planning department explaining that they now agree with the rest of the village that Staverton should be classed as an "other village" not a "secondary service village".

In overall terms the Council has not engaged constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis in maximising the effectiveness of the preparation of the Plan:

A substantial area of Staverton lies within the Conservation area and the village is surrounded by Strategic Land Allocation (SLA). Staverton has little capacity to build within its confines and its roads and lanes are manifestly unsuited to an increase in cars. Its sewage system is already at capacity and Staverton is one of the few villages that has its own treatment works and whose main pipes are smaller than modern systems.

Feedback to the recent neighbourhood plan consultation unsurprisingly revealed a strength of feeling among parishioners that an upgrade to the sewerage system is a prerequisite to any future development.

The Staverton Housing Needs Survey indicated that 11 existing residents may have a housing need but Part 2 of the Local Plan intends to allocate 1150 units within 10 minutes' walk of Staverton. Therefore any residual (particularly affordable) need could easily be met by that development or by a small amount of development within Staverton. Encroachment onto 'Open Countryside' outside the village confines should be declined as the rural housing need has been exceeded.

DDC's planning department relied on information provided by those who responded to the Consultation in 2016 but unfortunately those parishioners with no links to the parish council were unaware of this Consultation. It has since emerged that the Parish Council Representatives at the time initially offered 'No Comment', although none could recall the Consultation.

Therefore the preparatory work for the Local Plan was influenced and informed by the minority who did respond, a situation that could have been dealt satisfactorily if the Council had engaged constructively, actively, and on an ongoing basis with the community through its parish council.