



Rolleston on Dove Parish Council

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Dear Prime Minister,

It was with great anticipation and pleasure that we as Parish Councillors for Rolleston on Dove, Staffordshire learnt about the Conservative plans for legislation on Localism – an opportunity at last for a local community to have a power that gave it a say in how it wished to develop its community in a way that the local people wish, to not be in a position where commercial ambitions of developers would often be driving developments in our landscape.

Rolleston on Dove Parish Council recognised the need to establish our own Neighbourhood Development Plan, especially given the lack of a Borough Plan, and we set up a Neighbourhood Development Plan Group to work with the Parish Council to do this back in May 2012. We followed all guidance to do things in the correct manner; we had a consultation document which consulted every household in the community, giving them opportunities to express their views on their own village, and this produced a high percentage of comments and information on which we could write our village plan. Of the 1450 sent out, 556 were returned – a return of 38%.

Our local MP, Andrew Griffiths, was fully aware of the efforts our community was making and gave his full support and advice to the NDP group, and being in the vanguard of Parishes doing this, we fully expected to have our Plan in place as one of the first villages in the country to have undertaken this task. Our local Borough Councillor was also in full agreement with our plan, which identified areas where the residents felt development should take place as well as areas it did not wish to see developed. The plan also had built into it a five year review to enable us to identify new needs our community may identify, and to continue development in the way residents felt was desirable. Having put the newly written plan out to consultation, having had it inspected by Mr Christopher Collinson, BA (Hons), MBA, MRTPI, MIED, MCMI, IHBC during October 2013 and minor alterations made in accordance with the Inspector's recommendations, we fully expected this to be ratified by the local Conservative run East Staffordshire Borough Council as the Inspector stated that the Neighbourhood Plan was capable of meeting the legal requirements set out in the Localism Act of 2011. Ultimately we have invested time and resources in to a project that has been frustrated by local government process, leaving those involved disillusioned with localism and the whole NHD policy.

By this stage in late 2013 the Borough Council had started to realise it was well behind schedule with its own Local Plan, and any NDP's which came into force prior to their plan being adopted

would take precedence. We were deemed to be a Tier One village based on amenities and services available, though we have repeatedly pointed out to the Borough Council that their data was flawed as well as their criteria of determining where the centre of the village was to enable them to obtain a best fit for these services and amenities! This has all been to no avail, and as such leaves us open to the need for a “significant” development within the village. In fact our plan would provide at least the same number if not more of housing opportunities within the village.

The Borough Council have now spent over 2 years frustrating our attempts at having our inspected plan passed and in place whilst the Borough Council have produced their own Local Plan which goes before the council this week for ratification. Unsurprisingly their Local Plan identifies a site within the village they wish to have developed – one the village referendum overwhelmingly showed that residents did not want to have developed. This site was a former college playing field and was subjected to a planning application that we successfully fought and had refused on grounds of localism and prematurity. An appeal was made and it was called in by the previous Secretary of State to the Department for Communities and Local Government. He too found in our favour, but a further appeal was made on the grounds of procedure, and this is currently being determined by Right Honourable Greg Clark, MP, the current Secretary of State, with a decision expected before mid-November.

In 2015 the Conservative Manifesto included a pledge to “ensure local people have more control over planning. Why is the East Staffordshire Borough Council not doing what the Government, our Local MP Andrew Griffiths, our local Borough Councillor Beryl Toon, our Rolleston on Dove Parish Council, but most important of all our village residents, want as set out in the National Planning Framework? Having worked through every available avenue to progress our NHD and ultimately been frustrated by the circumstances described above the Parish Council feel we have no remaining option other than to ask for your support to progress our NHD. We have undertaken all the required steps and taken all available advice and in many ways been an exemplar of the policy the Conservative government have sought to encourage. However we feel let down by the process we have encountered which we feel has not been within the spirit of the policy your government set in place. Please tell us what you can do to progress a democratically formed NHD which would have been in place by now were it not for a very challenging local political environment for the plan. We need to secure the passing of our Village Development Plan to give our villagers the security they want and prevent the short term commercial ambitions of developers that conflict with long term sustainable growth of the village at the cost of the village community.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Sanderson
Chairman of Rolleston on Dove Parish Council, Staffordshire.