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My ref : PWJR/001
Date : 19 September 2017



Mr Robert D Armstrong
Clerk to Luddington Parish Council
October House
Loxley
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Councillor Peter Richards
Portfolio Holder – Housing and Infrastructure

Dear Mr Armstrong

Feedback from Long Marston Stakeholder Meeting

I refer to your letter dated 16 August 2017 to myself and Councillor Jeff Clarke (Warwickshire County Council) regarding the stakeholder meeting held at Elizabeth House on 31 July. We have been seeking a full professional response to the policy points you have raised, which is why our response has been delayed until now. This letter is an agreed response from both myself and Councillor Jeff Clarke although I am the signatory to the letter.

It is my belief that Stratford-on-Avon District Council continues to co-operate with Luddington residents willingly in dealing with issues they raise and that has been enhanced by the constructive manner with which they have presented their arguments. Sadly, the tone of your letter undermines this situation, especially your three bullet points in italics on the front page.

Cllr Christ Saint (Leader of the Council) had a positive hand in the document that was circulated by email on Friday 28 July. A group of Councillors reviewed that document before it was signed off to check that Members were content with the level of information that was to be circulated. It contained nothing new and could have been handed out for the first time at the 31 July meeting. We thought it would be helpful to circulate it as soon as it was ready.

I do not accept your attempt to dismiss the integrity of the panel of experts at the stakeholder meeting on the basis of one issue.

Your comments in respect of the EIA Scoping report were taken into account in the writing of the formal scoping request and your comments were also appended to this report in full. I note that you will submit comments in respect of any application submitted for a South Western Relief Road (SWRR).

Your attempts to dismiss the MM78 modification now may be rather misguided, especially in the manner that you have challenged the Council's actions. The challenge should have been made when the Inspector put forward that modification. The District Council consulted on all of his proposed main modifications between 31 March and 12 May 2016 and all Parish Councils were notified of this consultation.

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Prior to the May 2015 elections, Councillor Robert Vaudry was the Ward Member for Old Stratford & Drayton Ward which covered Luddington and has provided the Council with copies of the Parish Council Minutes for much of the time in question. These Minutes clearly illustrate that Councillor Vaudry kept the Parish Council(s) in the loop regarding developments in the Core Strategy. I am led to consider what level of action by the Parish Council might have taken place at the time, when it would have been appropriate to ask the questions you are now asking. If no action was taken at that time, your current challenges are completely inappropriate and you should moderate your critical language.

I do not agree with your proposition that the District Council went back to CALA Homes to essentially 'bail them 'out'. The assessment of Long Marston Airfield as a strategic development option together with the associated SWRR was given careful consideration by the District Council and Warwickshire County Council throughout the Core Strategy process, particularly as a result of the required increase in housing numbers. The Inspector was clear in paragraphs 240 and 241 of his report that a wide range of issues had been looked at in respect of the SWRR and that none of these undermined the soundness of the LMA and SWRR allocation. The Core Strategy policies referred to in your letter have not been ignored and the Core Strategy would not have been able to have been adopted if there was an intrinsic conflict between policies in the Core Strategy.

The reasons for the Planning Inspector finding the Long Marston Airfield (LMA) and SWRR allocations acceptable are clearly and carefully detailed in the Report on the Examination into the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy dated 20th June 2016, including issues relating to landscape, flood risk and ecology. The Inspector dealt specifically with the SSSI and the position of Natural England in paragraphs 85-87 of his final report. The comments from the Environment Agency stating that it had no in principle objections are clearly detailed in paragraph 235 of the Inspectors report. I have seen no evidence to suggest that the SWRR is too close to the town and would be obsolete in 10 years as stated in your letter.

It should be borne in mind that the Inspector was fully aware of the Core Strategy objectives and all of its component policies in considering LMA and the SWRR as he was duty bound to consider the soundness of the Plan in its totality.

The evidence report which was jointly prepared by Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwickshire County Council clearly explains the process and alternatives which were considered. The Eastern Relief Road Options and South Western Relief Road Options were proposed by landowners and developers promoting sites for inclusion within the Local Plan.

The work undertaken within the Strategic Transport Assessments identified that to enable development south of the river, an additional river crossing was required to accommodate the development and alleviate the pressure of the constrained highway network within the town centre. This was fully explained and documented within the evidence report prepared and distributed for the Stakeholder Meeting.

In regards to the ARUP Strategic Transport Assessment, this was superseded by a further Strategic Transport Assessment which was prepared by Vectos Microsimulation and published in July 2015. This was based on the need to accommodate additional housing as required by the Planning Inspector, to provide an up to date assessment.

In regards to traffic flows, there is no evidence to justify that this will take place at present. As part of the planning application and development of the Transport Assessment, Cala are undertaking detailed transport modelling to understand the impact the development proposals and SWRR will have on the network. These will be reviewed by Warwickshire County Council, in its capacity as Highway Authority, to assess the impact, to identify mitigation which would be required to provide additional capacity on the network and to prevent unwanted movements on the network, including rat running through villages.

Warwickshire County Council are working with Cala on the design requirements of the SWRR and developing a series of options. However, as this has yet to be fixed in terms of alignment and design, no clear indication can be provided on costs or commuted sums at this moment in time.

I believe that the way forward for any dialogue with the Parish Council is one based on factual exchanges between ourselves that avoid personal jibes or innuendoes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Richards', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Peter Richards
Housing and Infrastructure Portfolio Holder

c.c. Cllr Chris Saint (SDC)
Cllr Jeff Clarke (WCC)
Mr Neil Hempstead (SDC)
Cllr Izzi Seccombe (WCC)
Cllr Mike Brain (WCC)
Cllr Peter Barnes (SDC)
Cllr Molly Giles (SDC)
Mr Nadhim Zahawi MP
Stratford-on-Avon Town Council