

Swinford Parish Council

c/o The Old Stables, Fir Tree Lane, Swinford, Leicestershire, LE17 6BH
01788 869 007 | clerk@swinfordparishcouncil.gov.uk

Mr Geoff Armstrong
Armstrong Rigg Planning
The Exchange
Colworth Science Park
Sharnbrook
Bedford
MK44 1LQ

Sent by email to: geoff.armstrong@arplanning.co.uk

25th July 2017

Dear Mr Armstrong,

**Representations to Swinford Neighbourhood Plan Publication of Revised Housing Policy
Land at Shawell Road and Land at Kilworth Road, Swinford**

I have been asked by the Parish Council to respond to your letter dated 4th July 2017, sent on behalf of your clients Mr and Mrs Morris.

Your letter appears to be underpinned by some misunderstandings about the nature of the process of neighbourhood planning for smaller communities and the Parish Council wish me to advise you of the following:

- The Neighbourhood Plan is a community plan, the Parish Council have developed the plan on the basis of what the community have told them from the consultation exercises so far, and on local information and statistics. They have taken the entirely independent advice given by Harborough District Council and by the Parish's consultants, YourLocale. This is in contrast to the partial approach adopted by yourself on behalf of your client.
- It is not a requirement of Neighbourhood Planning to employ professionals to undertake any part of the Plan preparation. Neighbourhood Planning is designed to be undertaken by communities. However, a degree of professional assistance has been very useful to the Council in their preparation of the plan.
- The requirement is that the evidence base should be commensurate with the complexity of the Plan. The Swinford Plan is a relatively less complex Plan and is required to be supported by an evidence base that is proportional to its level of complexity. The Parish Council is confident that the evidence base is sound and that it meets requirements. This view is supported by a significant majority of the statutory stakeholders who responded to the earlier Regulation 14 consultation (for details see the Parish Council website).

- With regard to the housing allocation process the Parish Council is aware of another Parish undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan where a landowner employed a planning consultant to try to challenge the process, which was undertaken using the same selection criteria as that employed in Swinford. This particular plan has just been examined and the examiner made the following comments that may be of interest to you and your client; *'An objection has been received from a landowner's agent, promoting a site not allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan. As set out earlier, a Neighbourhood Plan is examined against the basic conditions. It does not comprise a "beauty parade" of sites. Whilst the landowner's agent considers its site to be better than those allocated, I note that, whilst by their very nature, site assessments can involve subjective views, the allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan have emerged through a process appropriate to neighbourhood planning which is fully reflective of the community's "direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need" (Paragraph 183, the Framework).'*

The Parish Council and their consultants will examine the assessments that you provided and will take them into consideration when they undertake the next review of the Plan. You and your clients may wish to submit a revised version of your comments as part of the current Regulation 14 Consultation.

The Parish Council regard your comments about YourLocale and the personal comments made about one of their consultants as unhelpful and unprofessional. YourLocale have a strong and successful track record of supporting neighbourhood planning in a significant number of parishes and have been supportive of the Parish Council and of the community throughout the process that has been undertaken.

Although you may consider it to be in the interests of your client, the Parish Council remains concerned that your attempt to challenge and undermine the work that has been done is very much contrary to the best interests of the community of Swinford.

The Council welcomes positive and constructive feedback and will continue to work on the process within the timeframe that has been planned. They very much hope that your client will recognise that the policies put forward in the revised housing section of the Neighbourhood Plan are fair to landowners and represent a shared vision for the future of the community.

Yours sincerely,

K Clarke

Katherine Clarke
Parish Clerk
Swinford Parish Council