

Swinford Parish Council

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Harborough District Council
The Symington Building
Adam and Eve Street
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LE16 7AG

To: The Leader of Harborough District Council, The Joint Chief Executives of Harborough District Council, The Chair of the Planning Committee

Copies to Jonathan Bateman and Alberto Costa

29th October 2020

Dear Madam/Sirs,

20/00684/FUL Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 2 dwellings (revised scheme of 19/01029/FUL)

The above planning application for a development in North Street, Swinford was considered and approved at the planning committee meeting on Tuesday October 6th 2020.

Swinford Parish Council opposed the approval of the application for two reasons;

- The view along North Street, Swinford, was identified by villagers as an important village view which should be conserved as part of its Neighbourhood Plan. There are two listed buildings in close proximity to the site and villagers decided that the context of the land surrounding Glenview (the building to be demolished) was integral to the setting of the listed buildings. The plan is now made and as such is part of HDC Local Plan. The demolition of Glenview and its replacement by two dwellings much closer to the road radically changes the view along North Street.
- The new buildings will be directly opposite a grade 2 listed farmhouse, the owner of which presented evidence that the site of the new buildings as well as the ground disruption during the building process could compromise the listed building.

The Parish Council was supported by the local ward member Councillor Jonathan Bateman who spoke at the meeting in support of the Parish Council's case opposing the granting of planning permission.

The Parish Council would like to object in the strongest possible terms to the way that this application was managed by the planning officers and by the planning committee and its Chairman. What was clearly an important provision in the Neighbourhood Plan and as such part of Harborough District Council's Local Plan was ignored and talked down by officers and members.

Specifically, we object to;

- The conservation officer's report which was not published on Harborough District Council's website until two working days (Friday October 2nd) before the meeting giving no time for the Parish Council or the occupant of the grade 2 listed farmhouse opposite the site to make an informed response.
- The conservation officer states that the view '**does not form part of an important street scene within the village**' this is incorrect, he is expressing a personal opinion and one which directly contradicts Harborough District Council's Local Plan.
- During the meeting the planning officer, Adrian Eastwood, initially presented a balanced and clear account of the issues involved. However, he then proceeded to interject after each of the speakers who opposed, effectively steering the committee to disregard the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Those members of the committee who also spoke to undermine the weight of the Neighbourhood Plan and who chose to ignore the case being made by their fellow ward member.
- The member who asserted that the conservation officer's view should be given significant weight because conservation officers are 'hard to come by' and 'we are lucky to have one'. This was an entirely inappropriate comment and should have been ruled out by the Chair.

Swinford Parish Council is deeply disappointed that after all of the hard work and expense that we put into our Neighbourhood Plan we were let down by officers and members alike. We would like to be assured that Harborough District Council will put in place further training so that members and officers recognise the important statutory significance of Neighbourhood Plans and understand that they are not to be ignored simply because it suits the District Council's case.

Yours faithfully,

Katherine Clarke

Clerk to Swinford Parish Council