

EAST LEAKE PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman: Cllr C Oatey

Our Ref: NL/SL



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PRESS RELEASE

Open Letter to Parish & Town Councils in Rushcliffe from East Leake Parish Council

Is your Parish Council or residents group currently putting time, effort, and money into creating a Neighbourhood Plan? EAST LEAKE'S ADVICE IS - DON'T BOTHER. We were the first parish in Rushcliffe to adopt a Neighbourhood Plan and we have been appalled at how Rushcliffe Borough Council appears to ignore its policies in preliminary discussions with developers and when determining planning applications. The only recourse for us is to take their decisions to judicial review – a step that we are reluctant to follow because of the cost and complexity.

The latest decision that has shocked us is a reserved matters approval for 118 homes in which the houses for the open market are almost all expensive 4 bedroom detached. This goes completely against the Neighbourhood Plan policy on housing mix, Rushcliffe's own policy, and the wishes of our residents. Among all the market homes so far approved at East Leake, not a single one caters for the needs of older residents, and there have been precious few starter homes.

There are two things that are driving a horse and cart through our Neighbourhood Plan policies. The first seems to be the attitude of Rushcliffe's planning officers and committee, giving insufficient weight to the policies in our Neighbourhood Plan. This may be because they are unfamiliar with neighbourhood plans in general, or somehow regard them as less important than other policies, and it could be argued that will improve as more neighbourhood plans are adopted in the borough. But there is certainly no sign as yet. The recent adoption of Radcliffe's Neighbourhood Plan has not improved things – an application was recently approved there that went completely against their policy on the type of houses to be built.

The second problem is Rushcliffe's failure to maintain a five year housing land supply. This means that alongside the council's own policies in the Core Strategy, policies in the Neighbourhood Plan that relate to supply of housing land are deemed to be "out of date" and so they carry less weight than they otherwise would. That effectively means that developers have a better chance of winning appeals to build anywhere in Rushcliffe, particularly sites that are not protected by green belt.

It is worth noting that it is only policies that relate to supply of housing land that are deemed out of date by the government, i.e. **where** houses will be built. All the other policies, to do with **what** will be built, should be given full force. These policies could cover environmental aspects, house design, housing mix, improving the vibrancy of the village centre, and other aspects of development that are very important to the individual communities. At East Leake we have been sickened at how Rushcliffe Borough Council seems to have ignored the wishes of East Leake residents in this regard. So much for “localism”!

So – good luck with your Neighbourhood Plans if you are embarking on this process – it is a long journey and you will need perseverance and effort to get there. Let’s hope it will be worth it when you succeed. We are very willing to come out to Parish Councils to share our experiences if you would find this helpful.

Notes to Editors

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2. Rushcliffe Planning Application details:
Planning portal <https://planningon-line.rushcliffe.gov.uk/online-applications/>
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