

## **East Leake Parish Council**

### **Response to Consultation on the Operation of the National Planning Policy Framework**

**April 2014**

#### **Summary**

East Leake Parish Council is concerned that the current planning climate and operation of the NPPF place undue pressure on planning authorities by focussing mainly on targets for the number of homes built. Infrastructure is not being developed apace. There is not enough focus on the quality of developments, nor on the mix of housing. There is no attempt at planning street layouts, or place shaping – instead each development is being undertaken in isolation. For East Leake this is creating overload for a village infrastructure whose services, facilities, roads, and shopping centre cannot cope with the rapid, undisciplined, developer-led growth.

#### **Comments on the Operation of the NPPF**

1. The current planning climate is creating a rush of planning applications on green fields around East Leake – a lucrative location for developers, just outside the Nottingham green belt.
2. The Borough Council is approving all these developments, aware of its need to meet housing targets and knowing that, with no Core Strategy in place, any appeals by developers are likely to succeed.
3. Infrastructure is not being developed in parallel with these homes. The overall size of the village is increasing by 25% in a very short timescale, with no overall planning of the infrastructure changes needed, and no time for changes to take place. There is particular concern about schools, health centre, and sewerage. The growth can no longer be accommodated by a series of small improvements – a step change is needed, but there is no mechanism for ensuring that this takes place. Developer contributions arrive in dribs and drabs, in insufficient amounts to fund the new building work etc required.
4. There is no overall control of numbers of houses of different types being exercised by the Borough Council to match the Greater Nottingham assessed need for homes in the area. Aside from the affordable housing allocation, developers are building the most lucrative type of homes – almost exclusively 4 and 5 bedroom detached houses. Villagers comment that their young people cannot afford to buy homes in the village and have to move out. There are gaps in the housing ladder for growing families. This works against long term social stability, and a diverse community. This is not social sustainability.
5. Each housing development is being dealt with individually, leading to a series of island cul de sac developments around the village as plots become available. There is no attempt to link these to each other or to existing areas of housing via streets or rights of way. There is no sense of place shaping - planning streets or developing a community – the developments merely provide a series of island commuter estates. The layout encourages car journeys rather than more sustainable forms of transport.
6. There is no development of the shopping area, and the dangerous road junction at its centre, to cater for the growth – there is no mechanism or funding to allow this to take place.

## Background

7. East Leake is a village of some 7000 residents lying between Nottingham and Loughborough, in the Borough of Rushcliffe. It lies just outside the green belt around Nottingham.
8. Rushcliffe does not currently have an approved Core Strategy and cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing supply
9. East Leake has been in the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan since early 2012. A Community Led Plan is being prepared in parallel.
10. The draft core strategy judged East Leake to be a sustainable location for housing, and allocated a minimum of 400 new homes to it for the period 2013 to 2028 at a trajectory of 50 homes a year during the period 2018/19 to 2025/26. An infrastructure review for this level of growth was undertaken.
11. Since Autumn 2012 a total of 621 homes have been approved (in 6 separate sites), with 42 more homes (2 sites) under consideration and a further 75 homes in the pipeline. This is earlier than planned and at a rate far in excess of the trajectory. No further infrastructure review has been undertaken.
12. Consultation for the Community Plan revealed that many residents had concerns about rapid growth. They valued the rural setting of East Leake and felt that it should remain a village-style community and not a town. A substantial proportion objected to further expansion once the proposed minimum 400 additional new homes had been delivered. People are concerned about disappearance of green fields. Their greatest concern, however, is that development of the village infrastructure is not meeting housing growth.
13. The two primary schools in the village are full. There is talk of extending them to accommodate the children from the 621 homes but after this there is no room on either site for further extension. It is likely that homes will be sold before the school extensions take place.
14. The Health Centre is an old building already severely under capacity for the number of residents and certainly not able to cope with additional numbers or to extend the services to the range required for a modern Health Service.
15. The sewage pumping capacity is struggling to meet current demand. At certain times raw sewage is allowed to overflow into the brooks, and thence, when the brooks flood, onto the park and the children's playground. Heavy rain has seen this happen a number of times recently. Volunteers have had to remove toilet paper from trees.
16. The village centre contains a cluster of shops and a supermarket, Health Centre, Fire Station, Post Office, vet etc and acts as a hub for smaller surrounding villages. It is centred around a busy T-junction. Traffic backs up at times, and crossing the road can be problematic at any time. It has two free car parks which are unable to meet demand at peak times.

## References

- i. East Leake Neighbourhood Plan: <http://www.east-leake.gov.uk/east-leake-neighbourhood-plan>
- ii. East Leake Community-led Plan: <http://www.east-leake.co.uk/community-led-plan.html>
- iii. Rushcliffe Borough Council Core Strategy: <http://corestrategy.rushcliffe.gov.uk/Backgrounddocuments/>