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Mrs J Mashiter
Parish Clerk
Staindrop Parish Council
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8 March 2021

Dear Judith

I appreciate that members of the Staindrop community and the Parish Council attended Gainford Parish Council last Wednesday. Obviously, the estate was disappointed with the resolution that emerged from the formal meeting but we note that an extraordinary meeting of the Gainford Parish Council has been called for Thursday, March 11.

All of us who work at Raby consider ourselves to be part of the local community and we are extremely keen to ensure that the best possible outcome from our development proposals is achieved for the widest benefit.

To that end, we are wholly committed to continued dialogue with the communities in Gainford and Staindrop. Some villagers in both locations have raised a range of points about the housing developments and we are keen to discuss those further with the communities as well as the Parish Councils if at all possible.

If Staindrop Parish Council is willing to continue dialogue, may I suggest that we arrange a meeting at the earliest opportunity. We will spare no effort in trying to find a resolution to local concerns. We must also continue to do all we can to address what we believe are misperceptions about our development proposals.

It is disappointing that the proposals are being portrayed by some as purely repairs to the castle and other estate properties and we are anxious that the full facts are in front of everyone, particularly in view of the recently launched crowdfunding initiatives. For example, the Gainford Deserves Better crowd-funding page, gives a very selective and, in our view, unbalanced description.

We are proposing a deeply community-focused development at Raby Castle which will create a landmark visitor destination in Co Durham, bringing employment and economic stimulation

to the area. We have already invested heavily in this initiative and been through a rigorous planning process over the last 3 years or so.

The final total investment in the area will be in the order of £16 million, significantly beyond the funds generated by the housing schemes which are simply intended to address the heritage deficit. This element of our development proposals has been met with widespread approval from the local communities, Durham County Council and the relevant tourism bodies in the area.

Naturally, some people in both villages are not in favour of the proposed housing developments. We have nevertheless gone to great lengths to ensure that the scheme is sympathetic to the heritage of both villages and we engaged a leading and nationally recognised architect for this task. We are concerned that the support this development has received from thorough public consultation is not being reflected sufficiently by the Parish Councils. From the public consultation: 58% of feedback form responses were in favour of new housing in the village 64% were in favour of the design approach and 64% were in favour of the proposals to the castle.

All of us at Raby are concerned that local residents and the Parish Councils are fully and accurately informed as they consider whether to support the current fundraising for a judicial review. It is of course entirely your democratic prerogative to fund a judicial review but we should all be aware of what that entails. All parties involved will be exposed to substantial costs.

Like the Parish Council, both Raby and the County Council have taken specialist legal advice on the prospects of a judicial review; both relied on very senior specialist planning barristers and the clear opinion given to us is that Durham County Council's planning approval process would be upheld. Of course, opinions on the likely outcome of such a review will differ but we want to ensure that all residents are given as much information as possible.

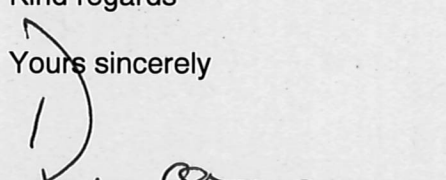
We realise the Parish Council is now focused on raising funds to bring a Judicial Review challenge and that must take its course but if the council is interested in discussing how we can make the developments more appealing to the village or simply how we can rebuild a line of communication then I'd be very happy to meet.

I would be grateful if you could forward this message to all Parish Councillors.

In the interests of transparency, we will be posting this letter on the estate website for wider community distribution.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



Duncan Peake FRICS
Chief Executive