

Press Release

**From Councillor Barry Stamp
Leader Liberal Democrat Group
Stafford Borough Council**

Date : 8th February 2004

Use: Immediate

Council Planning A Disgrace

A leading Councillor has described the handling of two planning applications by last week's meeting of Stafford Borough Council as a "disgrace".

Speaking after the meeting, Liberal Democrat Group Leader Barry Stamp said he was appalled that some members of the Council who had argued long and hard for one application took completely the opposite stance when the second application was discussed.

"Tonight's Council meeting was asked to decide on two planning applications both of which were to allow the building of an additional dwelling on an existing farm site. The Council policy is quite clear in so much as this type of development should only be allowed if an agricultural need can be proven. In the case of the first application even the Council's consultants reported that no such need existed, but despite this fact a number of Councillors argued that this fact and the policy should be ignored and the plan approved. Indeed it was. However when the second application was considered the same Councillors argued that as no agricultural need had been given by the applicant the plan should be refused. To make matters worse after the first vote to approve this plan was defeated a second vote to refuse the plan also failed. In the ensuing turmoil that followed another vote was taken to refuse the plan, which this time was passed. I cannot believe that some members of Council could act in this way, and I am extremely concerned what messages this sends to the public. Unfortunately the Council officers did not help the situation, as they seem unable to give any advice on either the details of the application or the Government Planning Guidelines that were fundamental to the case. I have already complained to the Chief Executive and the Council's Monitoring Officer and I am now looking to see if I can report this matter to a higher authority. It is important that local residents have confidence in the way the Council handles planning applications and tonight's meeting certainly does not help this cause," said Councillor Stamp.

Further details from: Councillor Barry Stamp
Telephone: 01785 822723 Mobile 07771 688331