

## 31 Aug 2022 Letter to CAS and WSC

cc Sarah Pugh , [planningpolicy@westsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@westsuffolk.gov.uk) , Lee Price, Stansfield residents

### Stansfield Housing Survey October 2020

Dear Sarah Mortimer and Julie Salisbury,

On 16<sup>th</sup> August 2022, the five Stansfield Parish Councillors ( Sarah Hopkins, Fay Gridley, Julie Ghirardani, Martin Slater, Wendy Johnson-Houghton) who now form the housing needs working party, met and decided unanimously that the inconsistencies and errors of considerable concern contained in the report and results from this survey conducted by CAS mean that it cannot be relied upon for any purpose whatsoever.

SPC therefore instruct WSC to destroy and/or officially nullify the housing survey report given to them on 21 June 2020 by CAS and ourselves ( SPC), and to ensure that no part of the information contained in it is used by anyone for any purpose, including the new WSC Local Plan.

We further request a refund from CAS of the fee paid for this survey.

The reasons for these decisions and instructions were discussed by SPC councillors with CAS and WSC on July 11<sup>th</sup>. On 19<sup>th</sup> July Sarah Mortimer of CAS wrote to SPC with two suggested options for moving forward. Neither of these options are acceptable to SPC.

To reconfirm, the reasons include the following significant points:

1. CAS has informed SPC that statistical anomalies and inconsistencies, duplication of data and other errors cannot be corrected. These errors mean that the data produced is unreliable and report cannot and should not be used for the purpose for which it was commissioned.
2. At the outset, CAS promised that they could separate out any additional surveys they gave out from those given to each household in the village. CAS misled us on this. This did not happen, and CAS now say they are unable to do this, which has led to duplication of data. *(This is because one Stansfield household requested and was eventually given two extra questionnaires, although considerable counter opinions were voiced. The incorporation of the data from these two questionnaires within the results has resulted in an inconsistency which did not come to light until after the full HNS results were examined by SPC councillors. But, as stated above, CAS cannot separate out the data from these two questionnaires to correct this.)*
3. Also at the outset, CAS promised a flexible and adaptable survey that could be tailored to Stansfield parish needs. This was in actuality resisted by CAS and did not happen. There was only one minor addition of the word NONE in the options related to Question 16.
4. Throughout the past two years SPC has been asking for errors to be corrected and even requests for clerical and typographical errors to be corrected have been met by resistance from CAS.

5. SPC have requested additional information about types of housing need identified in the survey to be released to residents but this was refused by CAS. This, and the fact that CAS insisted on a secrecy clause in the contract SPC were obliged to sign with them, are counter to the Rural Housing Alliance Core Principles for such surveys (points 6 & 8). Namely
6. that the results and the report should be *“publicly available”* and that *“all residents should be able to access the results,”* even though there is a need for the actual data to be *“anonymised and kept confidential”* as well as *“data protection statements are clear and correct”*(point 5). These two principles taken together do not have the same meaning as the total confidentiality claimed necessary by CAS.
7. It was stated to SPC during the survey process that CAS sought to take a commission from any development that might take place as a result of the survey report and recommendations. This means that CAS could be perceived\* not to be acting independently, and to be biased in favour of development. Residents who have subsequently learned of this fact have said they would not have filled in the survey if they had known this in advance.

*\*RHA core principle 2 states that HNS surveys should be” independent and balanced and be **seen to be independent”**.*

SPC look forward to your replies and acknowledgement that the actions we have instructed have been undertaken.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hopkins, for Stansfield Parish Council