

Update on the Lyonshall Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

Currently the NDP draft produced by the working group is being worked on by the Parish Council to confirm that:

- it covers fully and accurately the results from the two questionnaires, and that those results do not conflict with each other to make the NDP unsustainable. In that event a third questionnaire would be required.
- it covers all the areas in the core strategy that it needs to.
- it is in a format that the planners in Hereford can use easily to apply the planning policies without the need for their having to impose their own interpretation on those policies.

The NDP is not progressing as fast as we would have liked. We are working on the policies but our detailed work on the plan as a whole has been rather put on hold by the number of potential new builds in the pipe line which will be decided mainly under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

This has occurred because Herefordshire does not have an approved Core Strategy in place. We understand it is unlikely to be in place until well into the second half of the year. Consequently, for the time being, the document with the greatest influence on planning applications in Herefordshire is the NPPF, where there is a presumption of support for development to alleviate the UK's housing shortage. This situation has tempted a number of people and businesses to take advantage of the more supportive planning regulations under the NPPF.

It is important to recognise that Herefordshire Council's (HC's) current version of the Core Strategy is being challenged, amongst other things, on the basis of the amount of housing that it intends to encourage over the period of the plan, particularly in rural areas. It would be ill-advised, and perhaps legally fraught, for Lyonshall to attempt to finalise its NDP prior to the formal ratification of HC's Core Plan.

The NPPF is not all bad news. It does require the community to be consulted. We have spent many hours on these potential developments trying to protect the village from, for example, the immediate building of some 20 to 30 affordable houses which could not be filled by Lyonshall residents and which in many cases might be sold to housing associations anywhere in the country, potentially attracting an influx of difficult residents.

We have also been ensuring that any houses that might be built do at least comply with the diversified design requirements expressed by the Parish – different designs, well spaced out, off-road parking, good landscaping etc. We are also endeavouring to secure (voluntary) tangible benefits for the parish in terms of cash and land from the prospective developers to help secure funds for the village centre project.

We face the problem that the strongest and most-supported concept (81%) was for a Village centre with a pub and a shop and a new village hall sited in the centre of the village. However, the results of the questionnaire on

development also endorsed (63%) a growth rate of some 2 additional houses each year over 20 years. That rate of development will not sustain a centre of the village with a pub and a shop, otherwise they would both have been up and running by now. With the benefit of hindsight, the question should have been, "Which option do you want - a vibrant village centre or do you want to limit the growth rate to 2 houses per annum for the period of the plan?" We cannot have both.

The proposed developments could be one way of financing a good proportion of the costs of the village centre concept that has so much support.

The full scale of the proposals which Kinsey Hern has recently explained, in the open sessions held at The Barns in December, clearly goes well beyond the low growth rate broadly accepted in the questionnaire responses. As a consequence the Parish Council (PC) has decided that it must consult the whole Parish, giving every person on the electoral roll the opportunity to have their say in favour or against that project.

We have now been asked by Herefordshire Council to comment and consult on three specific planning applications submitted by Kinsey Hern to build 15 houses. From the open sessions described above we know that this is only part of the full development which could total 45 houses and therefore we can reasonably expect further applications in time. However from a legal standpoint we can only, at this point, comment and consult on the applications for the 15 houses submitted so far. We will have an opportunity to comment on further applications as they come in.

The first thing we are doing is seeking an extension for the formal consultation period, and we are asking Kinsey Hern to support that request.

The PC will prepare a paper to be sent round to each voter on the register which outlines the proposal, and explains where the detailed applications can be viewed. It will go on to provide an analysis of the pros and cons of the applications for the Parish and give the PC's recommendation. A Public Meeting will also be arranged where questions can be addressed. All voters in the parish will be asked to vote for or against the proposals.

In addition to Kinsey's specific proposals, there are two other possible developments being floated at the moment. These are currently being consulted on by the developers with Herefordshire Council, as part of their pre-application advice stage. In total, these two proposals, were they to come to fruition, might involve an additional 15 or so dwellings. At the moment, because there are no planning applications for them, they are only possibilities.