

Rushwick Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Meeting In Rushwick Village Hall on 11 December 2019

The purpose of the meeting was to present the results of the village survey and discuss how these can be translated into policies that reflect the views and opinions of the residents of the parish. The meeting was attended by 45 parishioners.

The meeting was opened with a short presentation summarising the main points of the survey results. These are:

- Out of the 577 forms delivered, a total of 258 were completed and returned; a response rate of 45%, which is considered a good representation
- Most of the results were consistent with resident's opinions from previous consultation
- More than 90% of respondents agreed with the outline vision and objectives
- Most important village characteristics (>75%) were being surrounded by fields and village green spaces
- The top 5 concerns about the future of the village were Loss of green spaces, village identity and rural views; too many housing developments and becoming adjoined to Worcester city
- Nearly 80% of residents use a car as main mode of transport. The lack of suitable public transport is a major concern. The two most important transport issues were improved bus service and re-introducing a railway halt within the village
- The 2 most important improvements were considered to be informal open spaces, footpaths etc and public transport network into Worcester
- Other improvements getting more than 50% support included improved village hall, cycle routes and footpaths, formal open spaces for sport and recreation and close availability of medical services
- Any future development should be restricted to small developments (<10 houses) or infill. The most favoured type of development was broadly mixed but mainly focused on smaller houses and bungalows.
- Most respondents felt it was very important that any future development met the following criteria:
 - No adverse effect on views
 - Retention of green spaces
 - Maintain access to footpaths
 - Maintain/enhance informal green space

Following the presentation, the attendees were split into three groups to discuss the results and how these could be translated into neighbourhood plan policies. Each group addressed a particular aspect of the plan. The three subject areas were:

- Housing,
- Countryside and Environmental, and
- Traffic, Transport and Community Facilities

At the end of the discussion period each group summarised their comments and recommendations to all the attendees. These will be taken by the steering group to produce draft policies, which will be published and distributed for comment and discussion. The comments and recommendations from each group are summarised below.

Housing

Rushwick residents continue to be dismayed at the level and size of housing developments that continue to be built in Rushwick and the immediate surrounding area. If this level of construction continues it is feared that the rural village character of Rushwick would be lost, with it becoming merely a suburb of Worcester. There is also the very real concern that open spaces disappearing and the loss of beautiful views from Rushwick.

Hence, residents agree with NDP policies that require housing developments to be strategically planned and to be limited in quantity (no more than two or three within Rushwick), and with the developments consisting of considerably smaller numbers of homes: no more than twenty or, where appropriate infill. However, even infill development should be considered carefully. Infill development can also have issues, such as over-development of a small plot of land and homes not having reasonable outdoor space.

Housing should reflect real need, i.e. a mix of affordable homes, starter homes for young families which would especially help to maintain Rushwick's sustainability and smaller bungalows which may be particularly attractive for older residents who wish to downsize, but remain in the area.

There is a concern that some developers are not fully aware of the type of houses that the market requires. Consequently, in what can only be assumed to be a desire to build houses that they believe will maximise profits, demand can be misjudged. As a result, Rushwick has experienced some houses on new developments left unsold for a long period of time.

Any new homes should also be built to high standards and take into account issues such as flooding, climate change and loss of wildlife habitat.

Any developments that might get built should be located in parts of Rushwick that do not create inconvenience to current residents or cause problems for getting around Rushwick. Builders who construct developments in Rushwick should also be considerate to the current residents and seek to minimise the disruption they cause.

Countryside and Environment

There is a strong desire to maintain Rushwick as a village settlement and resist any coalescence with Worcester city. Consequently, it was considered important to maintain the current 'significant gap' to the east of the village which is identified as such in the current South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP).

It was also considered important to maintain/introduce a new significant gap between the village and the 2000 house development at Temple Laugherne (Worcester West urban extension) as proposed in the current SWDP.

There was a strong desire to maintain significant views from the village, the principal view being the Malvern Hills.

Important green spaces in the village were discussed. The group considered the principal important green spaces were the field next to the village hall and the land south of Bransford Road opposite Broadmore Green to protect the significant view.

Other issues that the group would like to address were protecting the land adjacent to the watercourses, encouraging tree planting on open spaces where appropriate and encouraging wildlife habitats.

Traffic, Transport and Community Facilities

People considered that the Village Hall needed to be made the hub of the community. The redevelopment of the Hall was seen as a priority to making this happen. Opinion was that a rebuild would achieve this aim more successfully than a renovation project.

Although Playscape was a good resource for the younger members of the village, there was a definite need for activities for teenagers in the village. Not only for large groups such as playing football but also for activities that could be completed by smaller groups i.e. tennis, netball and basketball. A youth group that could meet in the Village Hall would also be welcomed.

The Cricket Club was seen as an important part of Village life.

There was also support for the introduction of further seating around the village. What was the point of having views of the Malvern's if there was nowhere to sit and enjoy them?

Although people welcomed the footpaths around the Parish; there was concern, however, that once outside the Parish Boundary that they quickly became unkempt.

It was considered that the roads did not allow for further cycle paths in the Parish, although there was support for making the pavements dual usage where appropriate.

It was telling, that although Rushwick is part of Malvern Hills District Council that there is no direct bus service to Malvern, and adds to a feeling of isolation from our district hub. The two High Schools that Rushwick falls within the Catchment Area of are both not able to be reached on foot, and

cycling to them is difficult given the lack of cycle paths between Rushwick and Malvern. Or where they do exist that there is encroachment by overgrown plants.

Although people were not in favour of a new station with the proposed infrastructure, there was support for a Halt to allow easier access to Malvern given the lack of a direct bus service as highlighted previously.

As a village we are a community, and we need to ensure that the identity of Rushwick as a village is maintained rather than being subsumed into Worcester.

From the discussion the following policies were agreed as being relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan:

- Maintain and improve facilities on recreation ground for young people
- Encourage development of a youth club and more/facilities/activities for teenagers
- The introduction of additional seating around the Parish
- Improving the Village Hall and Its Facilities
- To encourage improvement in available public transport to meet the needs of the Parish
- To campaign for/promote the development of safe accessible cycle routes