

## MALVERN WELLS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Special meeting of the Planning Committee duly convened and held in The Severn Hall, Three Counties Showground on **Thursday 18th April, 2013** commencing at 7pm.

**Present:-**

**Councillors: -**

P Buchanan (Chairman)	
A Hull	N Johnson
Mrs A Bradshaw	Mrs H Burrage
K Wagstaff	J Black
B Knibb	M Victory
K Hurst	S Freeman

**In attendance: -**

Mr D Taverner (Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer)  
District Cllrs C Cheeseman and Mrs J Campbell

**Apologies recorded: -** Mrs C O'Donnell and S Atwell

- 1 Disclosable Pecuniary interest declarations and any changes to be notified to the Register of Interests and Gifts & Hospitality** – No changes were necessary to Members previously recorded declarations which included the addresses of each individual Councillor and thus recorded their proximity to the application and the site which was due to be considered.
- 2 Planning application referred by Malvern Hills District Council for comment, as follows:**

**13/00283/ OUT- Land adjoining Hanley Road & Rothwell Road** - Outline Planning Permission for the development of up to 184 residential dwellings, including some affordable housing with access from Hanley Road and Woodfarm Road.

Mr Paul Fong, representing Hunter Page Planning Ltd, the applicants planning agents, presented details of the outline application and answered questions on points of detail that were raised by Council members and local residents.

Approximately 250 local residents were in attendance and the Chairman formally opened the meeting for public comments. Several parishioners had previously registered their intention to speak on the application and, although one spoke to support the application, an over whelming majority spoke to oppose it.

More than 50 letters of objection to the application had also been registered with the District Council.

Many further public points of objection and questions concerning the application were received from the floor.

Following considerable discussion the Chairman then formally closed the open public session part of the meeting.

Having listened to the views that had been expressed and having taken account of the numerous letters of objection regarding this application the Chairman then **proposed** that the following letter should be sent to the District Council setting out the Parish Council's strong objections to the application:-

1. In essence the Parish Council objects to any built development on this site, which is to the East of the Malvern Wells built area and in an Area of outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Geopark.
2. There is an established building line which runs along the back of properties on The Moorlands, down Hanley Road and along Rothwell Road. Land to the East of this should remain as agricultural with occasional buildings in a rural setting.
3. The application claims that within MHDC there is a shortfall of required housing land requirements. The SWDP clearly identifies a land supply which meets government requirements and it does not include this site.
4. The submitted Environmental Impact Assessment claims consultation with the Parish Council. This is not true. There has been an open public meeting, but the Parish Council has not previously formed or expressed any views on the subject.
5. The application states that the agricultural value is below "best and most versatile". This assessment is unsurprising as the owner has deliberately allowed it to degenerate into this state. It has in the past supported crops, cattle, sheep and horses. It could easily be returned to these uses.
6. The proposed design statements make much of the idea of a soft interface between the settlement edge and the open countryside to the East. Such an interface already exists along the rear boundaries of properties on The Moorlands and this would simply push that interface further east in what could then become 'urban creep'.
7. It is suggested that open spaces within the development would be run by a management company controlled by owners and residents. There is no indication of how this would be funded or what restrictions would be put in place. Open spaces should be in public ownership.
8. The claim that this application is consistent with all levels of planning policy is clearly false. The government has stated that preservation of conservation areas and AONBs should always take precedence over sustainable development.
9. The application appeals to the government policy to 'boost significantly the supply of housing', whilst ignoring the sites which have been identified to achieve that end and the policies which are designed to protect the AONB.
10. The application claims that the site does not display any sensitive characteristics of the AONB. Part of the character of this AONB is the views from the Malvern Hills across the rural Severn Plain. Any building here would affect those views which are important to local residents and draw in tourists, boosting the local economy.
11. The application claims that the impact on the wider AONB is predominantly negligible. This in itself is ground for refusing planning permission as any change is required to have a positive effect on the AONB.
12. That application acknowledges that planning permission should only be granted in exceptional circumstances and then lists circumstances which it claims make it exceptional. After even a cursory glance at the list it becomes clear that the claims are false, irrelevant or can be delivered equally easily outside the AONB.
13. In claiming the application is consistent with the policy to locate development at Malvern, it fails to recognise that other areas of Malvern have been identified and that this site is not needed.
14. The claim that the visual impact will not be altered is clearly false as the views from the hills will be of more roofs and less rural fields. This may be a small area compared to the total landscape, but it is part of the scenery to which the eye is drawn.
15. The statement that the site 'currently contributes very little' is true, but only because the owner has deliberately allowed it to become that way and so this is no reason to allow building.
16. The proposed access from Hanley Road is approximately 75 metres North West of the junction with Green Lane and Rothwell Road. Whilst this may meet the Highways standards, we question whether it will be a safe junction, from our local knowledge of the speed of drivers at that point which regularly exceeds the legal limit. The access from Wood Farm Road is on an already dangerous corner with no pedestrian walkway.

17. The Statement of Community Involvement shows clearly that the overwhelming view of the public is against this development and yet these views have been ignored, claiming that technical assessments show any fears to be groundless. These assessments were not independent and so their conclusions were entirely predictable and are not grounds for permitting development.
18. The Planning Statement says the development is sustainably located, siting among other reasons the local primary school. It fails to address the fact that the school is already full on a site which does not allow for expansion.
19. The sustainability matrix claiming positive or neutral effects in every category is salesmanship rather than fact. Here are just 2 examples. Biodiversity is claimed to be positive because there will be habitat improvements. The building of houses and the additional vehicles and people is clearly a negative effect and the habitats can easily be improved without putting up buildings. Economic Development is claimed as a positive effect, whereas in fact it could have a negative effect on the tourist trade and the other cited economic benefits can be achieved by building in the areas identified in the SWDP rather than within this part of the AONB.
20. It is claimed that this development will meet local demand and yet that demand has not been demonstrated and there are unsold properties of a range of sizes in the parish which indicates that there is no demand.
21. Much is made of affordable housing without recognising that public transport is infrequent and the nearest doctor, vet and major supermarket are all over 3 miles away.
22. Far from encouraging walking, cycling and use of buses, development here will only increase the use of private cars.
23. The Three Counties Showground, a major contributor to the local economy, requires a significant greenbelt between itself and the built environment due to the nature of its activities. Factors include the noise from some events and the housing of large numbers of livestock at others. We believe the current separation should not be reduced.
24. Abbey House has been successfully developed as a rehabilitation centre for men with psychiatric illnesses. These residents have benefited greatly from a secluded rural environment, which would no longer be the case if this land were developed. There would then be a negative effect on the local economy if the unit relocated elsewhere.

The Chairman's proposed letter of response was **seconded** by Cllr Wagstaff and it was **unanimously resolved** that it should be sent to the District Council for consideration in their role as the Principal Planning Authority who would be adjudicating on the application.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 9 pm

Approved by the Chairman .....

24<sup>th</sup> April, 2013