

Parish Council of Alfrick and Lulsley

Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council on Tuesday 18th November 2014 at 19:30hrs in the Village Hall, Alfrick.

Present:

Miss L Randall, Chair.

Mrs C Williams, Messrs: P Brown, A G Cooper, B Fishwick, G Lowe, B Martin, P Tuthill, (County Councillor), D Hughes (District Councillor), A Warburton (District Councillor), G M Brewin (Clerk), D Bradley (Parish Tree Warden)

Four visitors

Apologies:

Cllr Mrs D Jammal, A J Crockford.

Public Question Time prior to the formal meeting;

There was a discussion on the planning application at Stocks Road, with a general opposition to this proposal.

Reports:

County & District Cllrs, Footpaths' Warden, Tree Warden, Village Hall, Community Shop.

Cllr P Tuthill reported on further developments on the cost reductions at County Hall, the widening of the Worcester Southern Relief Road and progress on the proposed Parkway railway station at Norton. He also covered the consultation meeting on the expansion of Leigh and Bransford school.

Cllr D Hughes reported on First Aid Training - Saturday 13th at Martley, the developing strategy on Leisure Facilities across the district, The arrival of the new Joint Chief Executive at MHDC and the lobbying of the government over the weight to be given to 'emerging strategies' when considering planning matters.

Cllr A Warburton commented on the developing process of up-dating the draft SWDP, the sharing of executive services with Wychavon District Council and on speaking to the Northern Area Development Committee on local planning matters.

Dr D Bradley (Parish Tree Warden) advised that the application for work to be done at the Jubilee Plantation reference number 14/01381/TPA had been rejected and he would reconsider what remedial work could be done instead.

2. I have applied for 100 more free trees from the Woodland Trust which I will use to replace those from the 2012 planting around the village hall that have failed.

There were verbal reports from Cllr G Lowe, Parish Paths Warden, Cllr B Martin Community Shop Representative, and Cllr B Fishwick - Village Hall Representative.

The formal meeting commenced at 8:30pm

AGENDA

1.

Members' Apologies for absence

The apologies from Cllr Mrs D Jammal and Cllr A J Crockford were accepted.

2.

Members' Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in agenda items. The clerk advised members that should the newly formed Alfrick Residents Association become a formal organisation it may be necessary for councillors who are members of this organisation to declare this prior to council meetings.

3.

Confirm the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 21st October 2014

These had been circulated in advance, were agreed as a true record and signed by the chair.

4.

Financial Matters;

- a) Approve payment – W Roberts & Son Notice Board repairs - £191.62. - Agreed
- b) Approve payment – B G Services – VAS, service & location - £11.00 - Agreed
- c) Note – Clerk's Delegated Payment – WCC refund £432.50 (Share - picnic tables) - Noted
- d) Note - Clerk's Delegated Payment - A R Thomas – Playing Field Maint. £676.80 inc vat - Noted
- e) Establish a Budget Review Group to propose a budget and precept for 2015-16 at the January meeting.
Cllrs Miss L Randall, P Brown, A Cooper would form this group.

5. Planning and Environmental Matters;

- a) Consider a response to:
14/00999/FUL - planning permission for a detached house on Stock Lane, Alfrick Pound
Cllr Miss L Randall had circulated a draft response detailing objections to this proposal.
After a review of the situation it was agreed to accept these recommendations and the clerk was asked to respond accordingly. see appendix (a for details).
- b) Review progress on current planning issues.
There was no new information on the three sites under application, - Chapel Meadow, Clay Green Farm and Folly Road. It was agreed that an extra-ordinary meeting could be called if new information required this.

6. Community Planning Advisory Group

- a) Cllr A Cooper reported that the "Group' was close to completing its work and would be meeting again early in December.

7. Clerk's Report -

- a) Actions from the previous meeting:
Defibrillator Project: this is still under discussion with the Village Hall committee who are leading the project.
Mobile Infrastructure Project: the communications mast is now planned to be outside the parish but would still provide improved mobile phone reception around the area.
Location and management of the VAS with Suckley Parish Council: a meeting with Suckley Parish Council had taken place and there was agreement in principle that Alfrick and Lulsley should have a third location for the camera subject to agreement with WCC Highways dept.
Repairs to Notice Boards: these had been done - the notice boards were back in place.
- b) Correspondence Received: this had all been circulated by email.
- c) Items drawn to the council's attention: Members' attention was drawn to the latest edition of 'Clerks and Councils Direct' journal.

8. Items for the next meeting.

See agenda items - 4 (e), 5 (b), 7 (a).
Progress on the Village Shop project.

9. Confirm the date of the next meeting;

20/01/2015 at 19:30 hrs. in the Village Hall, Alfrick: Agreed

The meeting closed at 9:55pm

Minutes confirmed.....

20/01/2015

Alfrick and Lulsley Parish Council
Response to Planning Application Ref No: 14/00999/FUL
Proposed Development at Brooklands, Alfrick Pound

The Proposed Site

The proposed site sits in the hamlet of Alfrick Pound within the parish of Alfrick and Lulsley. This site is approximately 1.2 miles from the centre of Alfrick which is considered a category 3 village within the SWDP. Alfrick Pound itself is considered to be in open countryside. For further information in regards to the sustainability of Alfrick see section NPPF paragraph 7

Other factors to consider when deeming if this development site is appropriate are that the site is:

- In an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
- In an Area of Great Landscape Value
- Within 150m of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Close to a further SSSI in the Suckley Hills
- Within 150 metres of a Regionally Important Geological/ Geomorphologic Site.
- Adjacent to and in close proximity of Sites of Regional or Local Wildlife Importance.
- In full view of and close proximity to The Worcestershire Way & The Geopark Way, which run the entire length of the Suckley Hills.

Building in an Area of Outstanding Beauty

AN AONB is defined as:

'The natural beauty of AONBs encompasses everything – 'natural' and human – that makes an area distinctive: geology, climate, soil, plants, animals, communities, archaeology, buildings, the people who live in it, past and present, and the perceptions of those who visit it.' (Countryside Agency, 2001).

The Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan 2009-2014 provides guidance in line with the NPPF as to appropriate development within an AONB. This document validates with view of the Parish Council that this application should not be giving planning permission. The Parish Council want to draw attention to the following points (however this is not a complete list of relevant policies that support our argument).

Key guiding principles being:

- DP1** - The distinctive character and natural beauty of the AONB will be fully reflected in the development and implementation of consistent statutory land use planning policy and guidance across the AONB, and in decision-making on planning applications for development.
- DP2** - Development control should be guided by emerging characterisation studies including Landscape Character Assessments, Historic Landscape Characterisation and vernacular design studies, together with relevant capacities studies.
- DP3** - Development within the AONB (including landscaping schemes) should be subject to high standards of design and sustainability that reflect local character. New development should incorporate high ratings for environmental standards as soon as possible under the Code for Sustainable Homes and other relevant guidance. Energy conservation should be supported wherever possible.

Strategic objectives:

- DO2** - Support the production of community-led plans, strategies and statements (such as Conservation Area Appraisals and Parish Plans) that seek to guide appropriate development and conserve local distinctiveness.
- DO3** - Identify important and strategic views to and from the Malvern Hills, and ensure that these are recognised as material considerations in relation to planning decisions.

- ☒ **DO4** - Develop a programme of guidance on key planning and design issues appropriate to the AONB, aimed at planning authorities, developers and other interested parties, that takes account of the special distinctiveness of the area.
- ☒ **DO5** - Monitor the cumulative impact of small-scale development within the AONB and use data to inform the development or revision of relevant policy.

The Parish Council wish to particularly highlight:

DO2 - this application does not support the views of the community as outlined in the Alfrick and Lulsley Parish Plan and Design Statement last updated in 2013. The views of the parish are discussed in section Views of the Parish Views of the Parish.

DO5 – the Parish Council believe that the approval of an application within the AONB could have serious consequences as it sets a precedent for others to develop their land. The cumulative impact of which could be severe.

Key Planning Policies

Due to the importance of the area the site sits within the following policies within the NPPF should be given particular consideration.

NPPF paragraph 14

“At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.”

NPPF paragraph 7

“There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- *an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*
- *a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- *an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.”*

The proposed development does not fulfil any of the above aspects of sustainability.

The site in question is deemed to be within open countryside. It is approximately 1.2 miles from the village of Alfrick. This would represent a walk of approximately 25 minutes along rural lanes with no footpaths and limited viability in parts. In the emerging SWDP Alfrick is considered to be a Category 3 village due to its lack of facilities. The local services include a community run shop, village hall, church and mobile library service. It is important to note that Alfrick does not have a public house or a school. The bus service is regular but very infrequent and reliance on a car cannot be avoided if you live in Alfrick or the wider parish.

The local views of the community are outlined in section Views of the Parish Views of the Parish and show that there is little social benefit of this development.

Due to the site in question being in the AONB it also does not fulfil environment sustainability.

NPPF paragraph 55

“To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village

may support services in a village nearby. Local planning authorities should **avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances** such as:

- the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside; or
- where such development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets; or
- where the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and lead to an enhancement to the immediate setting; or
- the exceptional quality or innovative nature of the design of the dwelling.

Such a design should:

- be truly outstanding or innovative, helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas;
- reflect the highest standards in architecture;
- significantly enhance its immediate setting; and
- be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.”

The site in question is defined as a “new isolated home in the countryside”. The Parish Council do not believe that this proposal fulfils any of the special circumstances defined in the NPPF. The applicant is claiming the design is of exceptional quality however this is not the case. The design itself does not make any attempt to be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area. It is much larger than the surrounding housing and makes no effort to blend itself into the surrounding countryside.

NPPF paragraph 109

“The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government’s commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
- remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”

The proposed site is within the local AONB and site in extremely close proximity to a SSSI. It is unknown as to the ecological importance of this site as many of the surveys for protected species have not been completed. The ecological report provided as part of the application has stated that further surveys cannot be started until Spring 2015 and therefore it is largely unknown as to how important ecologically this site is.

The site is in an area which has several important and popular footpaths running through it. It is in full view of and close proximity to The Worcestershire Way & The Geopark Way, which run the entire length of the Suckley Hills. Due to the high landscape value of the area the footpaths are well trodden and enjoyed not only by local people but by people from the wider area.

NPPF paragraph 110

“In preparing plans to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment. Plans should allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework.”

As already discussed this site is within an AONB and in close proximity of a SSSI and therefore should be used as a last resort.

NPPF paragraph 113

“Local planning authorities should set criteria based policies against which proposals for any development on or affecting protected wildlife or geodiversity sites or landscape areas will be judged. Distinctions should be made between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites, so that protection is commensurate with their status and gives appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks”

NPPF paragraph 115

“Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads.”

NPPF paragraph 118, point 2

“When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:

- ☒ proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments) should not normally be permitted. Where an adverse effect on the site’s notified special interest features is likely, an exception should only be made where the benefits of the development, at this site, clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;”*

The Parish Council believe that further investigations should be carried out to determine the impact of this application to the SSSI in the immediate vicinity to the site.

Saved Local Plan

There are several policies with the Saved Local Plan¹ which support our objection. The Parish Council deem the below policies to be the most relevant.

Policy DS1 - The Location of Development

Development will be directed to sustainable locations most appropriate to the form and scale of development proposed on the following basis:

- ☒ Malvern represents the principal urban area and main town centre within the District and will be the focus for new development during the Plan period, particularly development that generates and attracts high levels of journeys. Development will be located within the settlement boundary, as defined on the Proposals Map.*
- ☒ Tenbury and Upton offer a wide range of services and facilities and include town centres serving the district’s rural community and wider tourism needs. Proposals for development serving local needs across the wider rural area, such as new commercial, retail, leisure and large scale community facilities will be located within the settlement boundaries established for these towns, as defined on the Proposals Map.*
- ☒ Development throughout the rural areas will be restricted to that required to meet local needs generated from within the rural areas themselves and as an aid to rural regeneration. Development proposals will be directed to the most appropriate rural settlement in accordance with the rural settlement hierarchy established by Policy DS11.*
- ☒ Development within the open countryside (beyond settlements as defined on the Proposals Map) will be strictly controlled. Development will be limited to those exceptions established within the Local Plan, which can only be located within the open countryside and which maintains or enhances the landscape character and biodiversity of the area.*
- ☒ The re-use of previously developed land in rural locations where development would be unsustainable or intrusive in the countryside will not be permitted.*

Policy DS2 - Sustainable Development

The District Council will require all development proposals to reflect the principles of sustainable development by:

- ☒ re-using land and buildings wherever possible in preference to greenfield land;*

¹ The NPPF para. 215 “ In other cases and following this 12-month period, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with this framework.

- minimising the need to travel between home, work, and other activities and providing opportunities for journeys other than by car;*
- protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and built environment; and*
- being well related to existing patterns of development.*

The Emerging SWDP

The Parish Council believe it's position on this application is also supported in the following policies within the emerging SWDP² particularly the following policies:

SWDP 23: The Cotswolds and Malvern Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

*“A. Development within or affecting the setting of the AONB (as shown on the Proposals Map) that would adversely impact the natural beauty³⁴ of the area will not be permitted. The priority is for carefully designed conversions.
B. Any development proposal must complement and enhance the special qualities of the landscape.
C. Development proposals must also be supportive of the most up-to-date approved AONB Management Plans.”*

SWDP 25: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

*“A. Development proposals and their associated landscaping schemes must demonstrate the following:
i. They fully take into account the latest Landscape Character Assessment and its guidelines. Depending on the location and / or nature of the proposal, a Landscape and Visual Assessment may be required;
ii. They are clearly appropriate to and integrate with the character of the landscape setting;
iii. As a minimum, they conserve the primary characteristics and important features of the Land Cover Parcel and have taken any available opportunity to enhance the landscape.”*

Views of the Parish

Parish Plan and Design Statement 2013

In 2006 the Parish Council along with other members of the community worked extensively to produce a Parish Plan and Design Statement. This has periodically been updated, the last update being in 2013. The Parish Design Statement made the following observations:

- Development outside the boundaries of the village should only be permitted in the most exceptional circumstances.
- Larger clusters of development either within the villages or in open countryside will detract from the nature of the Parish and should not be permitted.
- Infill development which seriously undermines this dispersed appearance should be discouraged.
- Any further development in the Parish should be consistent with maintaining the existing diversity of housing provision.

Parish Housing Needs Surveys and Neighbourhood Planning Questionnaire.

The Parish Council through the efforts of its Neighbourhood Plan Sub-committee has undertaken considerable consultation with the Parish. This has included a Housing Needs Survey in July 2013 and a questionnaire in July 2014 about wider parish matters. The full details are attached in The Parish Council has set out above a number of objections that it has in respect of this planning application and the reasons for the objections. The Council strongly believes that the issues raised are valid and supported by planning guidance at both national and local levels. The application fails on all of the criteria that can be applied, the only tenuous excuse for applying for planning permission rests on the

²NPPF para. 216 From the day of publication, decision-takers may also give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

“exceptional nature of the proposed house”, this is manifestly untrue. It is clear from the above that this development cannot be considered “sustainable” and therefore the only option is to reject this proposed application., but in summary the following points are important:-

Housing Needs Survey

This survey was completed in July 2013. The survey was distributed to 290 households, and 66 were returned this represents approximately 23% of the parish. The purpose of the survey was to assess the need for housing within the next five years. It sought information about the following areas of potential need.

- Households that needed to move within the Parish or neighbouring parishes or elsewhere now or within the next five years.

6 households indicated a need in this category.

- Those living in a household who would need to set up a separate home within the Parish or neighbouring parishes either now or in the next five years.

4 households indicated a need in this category.

- Households who have family who live outside the locality who need to move into the locality either now or within the next five years.

No households indicated a need in this category.

There were therefore 56 households who did not foresee a housing need in the next five years. It was assumed that if no response was submitted there was no need.

From the above result you will see there is negligible local need. For a category 3 village such as Alfrick the emerging SWDP states: “*Category 3 settlements are locations where only limited development to address local housing need is acceptable.*”

The saved policy DS12 – Housing in Category 1-4 Settlements from the Local Plan supports this stating: “*Category 3 Settlements are locations where limited development to address local affordable housing needs in the form of exception schemes under Policy C3 may be acceptable*”.

Neighbourhood Planning Questionnaire

In July 2014, a Neighbourhood questionnaire was sent to all 290 households. On this occasion the responses totalled 110, approximately 38%.

Of those responses 82 were from residents of Alfrick which has a population of 125 houses - a 66% response. For these purposes we are considering exclusively the results for Alfrick.

Questions were asked about Planning, Business and Economic Development, Transport and Highways, Recreation, Leisure and communications, Sustainable Development and finally Education. Below are the results of the most relevant questions relating to this planning application:

	Yes	No	No Opinion
Qu 1. Is there a sufficient quantity of housing in the Parish?	56	23	3

Qu. 2 If additional housing was to be build what type of development would you prefer?
One Large Estate
Individual Released Plot
Garden Infill Development
Conversion of Existing Buildings
Brownfield Sites
Greenfield Sites

Qu. 3 What type of housing would you like to see in any new development?	High 1	2	3	4
	Bungalows	44	14	8
Flats/Apartments	2	3	11	7
Large Homes 4 bed	4	5	10	13
Small homes 2/3 bed homes	21	24	17	2
Executive Homes 5 bed	3	3	2	6

Qu. 5 Should any development be in keeping with the parish character / landscape value?	
Yes	75
No	0
No answer	7

The questionnaire shows clearly the proposed development is contradictory with the village needs/wants.

Conclusion

The Parish Council has set out above a number of objections that it has in respect of this planning application and the reasons for the objections. The Council strongly believes that the issues raised are valid and supported by planning guidance at both national and local levels. The application fails on all of the criteria that can be applied, the only tenuous excuse for applying for planning permission rests on the “exceptional nature of the proposed house”, this is manifestly untrue. It is clear from the above that this development cannot be considered “sustainable” and therefore the only option is to reject this proposed application.

Alfrick and Lulsley Parish Council - 18th November 2014