

Hardwicke Parish Council

Extraordinary Meeting January 20th 2020.

Response to the consultation on the Stroud District Council Local Plan Review

Introduction

The district council's current local plan was approved and adopted in November 2015 with a requirement to undertake a review every five years.

Hardwicke Parish Council developed its Neighbourhood Development Plan over several years with the wide input of residents; it was adopted by the district council in October 2017 and has informed the basis of local planning decisions since that time. The Parish Council's response to the Local Plan Review is made with full regard to its Neighbourhood Development Plan and in recognition of the input from residents during the process.

Consultation

The district council has stated that the draft plan consultation is to understand *whether there is support for the Council's preferred strategy for meeting Stroud District Council's future growth and development needs.*

The implications for Hardwicke (paragraph 2.31 of the plan) identifies further 750 homes for Hunts Grove and a new 1200 development which is described as South of Hardwicke it also identifies Hardwicke as part of the Gloucester Fringe Cluster.

Response

The Parish Council does not support the identification of Hardwicke as being a strategic site for development.

There are a number of specific areas in the plan with which the Parish Council does not support;

- **Gloucester Fringe.**

The Parish Council does not support the identification of Hardwicke as being part of the Gloucester Fringe Cluster and would argue that Hardwicke, as a rural parish forms part of the Severn Vale group of Parishes. A significant part of the parish boundary borders the villages of Elmore and Longney and to the south Moreton Valence and it is with these parishes that we jointly work on a number of community issues. The Parish Council urges the district council to remove the designation 'Gloucester Fringe' and confirm Hardwicke as part of its natural geographical placement within the Severn Group of Parishes

- **South of Hardwicke**

The description of the land as being 'South of Hardwicke' is inaccurate as the land identified in the draft plan is in the heart of the Village. With this part of the village hosting 38 listed building and a grade 1 listed Church. (Identified in the Draft Local Plan as the Village Core)

- **Impact on Landscape and floodplain**

The proposed site is partly contained with a floodplain (this is acknowledged by the draft plan page 105) there are already significant challenges around flooding and lanes regularly affected by excess surface water and causing concern to local residents. The development at Hunts Grove is already causing capacity problems to the Shorn Brook and the further development there will add to these challenges. It is difficult to see how the provision of around 1200 additional homes can be delivered without causing further significant damage to existing roads and property. The draft plan acknowledges that there are a number of listed buildings (38) within the village core. These would be affected by development.

At a time when national political parties agree that greater numbers of tree planting should be undertaken to counter carbon emissions; it is noted that many protected trees and species are within the proposed site and would be compromised by a large scale development.

Local Ecology /Shorn Brook

Shorn Brook is a habitat for a number of species of wildlife, some of these protected, including water voles, kingfishers and more recently otters. It also supports colonies of small stickleback fish. However, the brook is being adversely affected by pollution from the new developments surrounding it.

Such rapid growth in development is unsustainable, especially with another 1200 planned, and any further development should be more sympathetically integrated over a much longer period if the village of Hardwicke is to remain recognisable and for the ecology and environment here to remain healthy for both human and wildlife inhabitants.

- **Neighbourhood Development Plan**

The Parish Council's NDP, overwhelmingly supported by residents and adopted by the District Council, sets out clear aspirations for the Village. Key to those aspirations are to; maintain development within the existing defined development limits, protect the rural character and nature of the village, ensure that the varied wildlife and habitats are maintained and enhanced and to support the extension to development at Hunts Grove whilst maintaining some limited development in the core of the village

Delivering Carbon Neutral by 2030

The Parish Council supports the policy of the district council to deliver carbon neutral by 2030 and it is vital that any development, large or small, must support the aims to of the policy.

The Parish Council believes that the maintenance and enhancement of open spaces with further protection and planting of trees and hedgerows are key to delivering those objectives. The objectives of reducing reliance on car travel not only supports environmental objectives but can support safer areas for walking with the reduced amount of vehicular traffic.

The way in which homes are built will contribute to a sustainable low carbon, and eventually zero carbon environment. Planning applications must demonstrate actions to; mitigate and adapt to the climate emergency, to reduce the ecological footprint and to address more localised problems such as flooding. Local plans should integrate with energy plans such as renewable heating and provision for electric charging points for vehicles

Protocol for dealing with developers

Hardwicke Parish Council is a signatory to the district wide Protocol for dealing with developers. This requires parish and town councils to engage, without prejudice, with potential developers.

As part of this protocol the Parish Council is aware that a major developer does have 'options' on the land set out within the draft local plan. The Parish Council has a duty to listen to any such proposals that are put forward by a developer and it would be failing in its duty to residents if it did not respond to invitations from a developer to meet and hear of their proposals. It is stressed that any such meetings do not constitute support for any proposals and any developer would be advised of this prior to any meeting, they would also be advised of adherence to the NDP

Conclusion

Notwithstanding this Parish Councils response in respect of the proposed development, will Stroud District Council confirm that if the land proposed for development in Hardwicke (to support Gloucester's needs, as indicated in the consultation document) is eventually included as part of SDC's requirements, that SDC will be the planning authority and will control how the site is developed with its usual consultation with HPC.

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