

ALMELEY PARISH
NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN
Update - November 2017

Time and events are moving rapidly with respect to the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), so it seems appropriate to now issue this update to all the residents of Almeley Parish.

Progress on the NDP has been continuing and reports delivered regularly to public NDP meetings and at Almeley Parish Council meetings. There was also a public event in May 2017 attended by residents of the parish to give their views on the vision and objectives for the plan by responding to a questionnaire. An overwhelming majority of respondents were in agreement with the objectives proposed. For those who did not attend the meetings or public event, this briefing is intended to help you understand what is being undertaken on your behalf. Information is also available on the parish website (almeleypc.org), comments and questions can be sent to the Parish Clerk, Emma Thomas. Ways you can contact the clerk :

Email: apcclerk@gmail.com Tel: 01885 490414

Address: Hadleigh, Bishops Frome, Worcester, Herefordshire WR6 5AP

The development plan, if adopted, will enshrine the wishes and aspirations of the local population as expressed by the public consultation and has been drafted to protect, as far as possible, the quality of life enjoyed by those fortunate enough to live where we do.

The NDP has involved a great deal of time and effort by the NDP Working Party and our planning consultant.

What Legal procedure does the Neighbourhood Development Plan have to go through?

The document has, as of 1st November, reached the final draft stage and should be completed and presented to the parish council before the end of the month. The plan will then be submitted under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2015) to Herefordshire Council's Neighbourhood Planning team and thereafter will be made available locally for a six week consultation with the community and statutory consultees in order that their views can be considered. The final plan will then be re-submitted to Herefordshire Council - Neighbourhood Planning Team who will be responsible for checking that all regulations have been met. If the plan meets all the requirements it will be published by Herefordshire Council for six weeks, this is Regulation 16, and there may be some amendments suggested at this stage. Following this, if Herefordshire Council approve the plan, it will be forwarded to the external examiner for scrutiny and any suggested amendments made.

Once the plan is completed, parishioners will have the final say in the form of a referendum conducted by Herefordshire Council, allowing all those in the parish on the electoral register to take part. If more than 50% of those voting in the referendum vote "Yes", the plan will be submitted to Herefordshire Council Cabinet for adoption into the Local Development Framework (the Statutory Development Plan) and will thereafter be used to determine future planning applications in Almeley Parish.

What does Almeley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan cover?

Much of the Almeley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan is devoted to protecting the character of our parish, countryside and its residents. It must achieve this, whilst encouraging sustainable agricultural and commercial activity, with policies covering future housing development, protection of heritage assets, woodlands, wildlife and our spectacular views.

The **objectives** of the plan are:

- **To maintain the rural character of the parish, its village and hamlets.**
- **To minimise the effect of further developments on the countryside and landscapes.**
- **To support the local economy within the parish.**
- **To provide opportunities for housing for existing and future residents of the parish including affordable, private and self-build homes.**
- **To accommodate future development within the capacity of local infrastructure.**

These objectives are explained and expanded in the full NDP document, which will be made available to the public once it has been approved by the Parish Council.

A survey and report on the ecology and environment of the parish will be undertaken over the next few months and it is planned that the resulting report will be appended to the NDP.

How does the NDP plan to meet Herefordshire Council's Housing Targets for Almeley Parish?

One part of the exercise which has been particularly difficult has been the imperative from Herefordshire Council for our parish to meet its share of the housing allocation target (33 dwellings) handed down by the government. The allocation period runs from 2011 to 2031 and although there have been some recent planning permissions granted, mainly at Woonton, we have some 15 additional houses to find. Herefordshire Council have specified Almeley and Woonton as the areas to accommodate these dwellings. There is therefore some pressure from Herefordshire Council to meet the target.

All parishes undertaking an NDP were required to make a Call for Land to meet that demand and in our parish that resulted in 10 potential sites being put forward. These were independently assessed by our consultant using criteria set by Herefordshire Council and two sites, one at Woonton and one at Almeley have been recommended as suitable. This will aggregate to 10 dwellings from NDP identified land. We are advised that additional applications for sporadic development or redevelopment of redundant farm buildings which are referred to as "windfall" are likely to occur. Given the pattern of such developments since 2000, a further 8 dwellings is considered to be a reasonable estimate for windfall applications within the plan period, this would meet the target. The Working Party and Parish Council are committed to ensuring, as far as possible, that additional housing in the parish achieves, but does not greatly exceed, the 2011 – 2031 target of 33 additional dwellings.

Although local potential developers have been encouraged to co-operate with the NDP process, some have declined to do so and a number of planning applications on agricultural land at Woonton have been made. If these were all approved, it could constitute an unsustainable increase in the size of that hamlet. This outcome has been resisted by the NDP group and Almeley Parish Council and it is hoped that the redevelopment of one redundant farmyard site at Woonton will, through the NDP, be the full extent of approval for further development there. The options put forward for Almeley village were considered and the Parish Council has decided that, from these, only a small site for 5 houses to the north of the village should be accepted for development.

Why should we proceed with the Almeley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan?

As stated above, the parishioners will have the final say on whether or not to accept the Neighbourhood Development Plan at a local referendum.

We would be failing in our duty to the parish were we not to make clear the consequences of not adopting an Almeley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan:

- All the proposed objectives listed above would be lost.
- We have been informed that Herefordshire Council has begun work on the Rural Areas Sites Allocation Plan that will allocate housing sites in those areas not covered by a Neighbourhood Development Plan. If Almeley Parish were amongst them we would lose the ability to influence which land should be developed, how many houses and what type and style of housing would appear in our parish.

If we do not adopt a Neighbourhood Development Plan, a great opportunity for the parishioners to influence the future of the parish and to enhance and protect the quality of life would have been lost.

That decision will ultimately rest with you, the residents of the parish of Almeley.

Almeley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan Group