

NDP GROUP REPORT ON PLANNING APPLICATION 204571 FOR 4-6 DWELLINGS AT LOWER WOOTTON FARM, WOOTTON LANE, ALMELEY WOOTTON FOR MR K HERN

This is an outline planning application. The application form states that it is for 6 dwellings, the site plan shows 4, other documents reference 4 - 6. As the existing barns are to be removed a Class Q application would not be permitted. The proposal is to clear the site and erect new houses, two 3 bed roomed and four of 4+. These are to be large detached properties.

The relevant provisions of the Almeley Neighbourhood Development Plan are:-

PARA 3.15 : New dwellings are to be located within or adjacent to, Almeley village or Woonton hamlet settlement boundaries other than defined exception developments.

ALM1: Protection of the landscape, hedgerows and broad-leafed trees. (Policies ALM2(b) and ALM5(f) also refer.) ALM1(d) requires that proposals meet the specific local housing needs in terms of house types and tenures. ALM1 requires that only sustainable development meeting the principles and policies set out in the NDP will be supported.

ALM2: Maintaining the landscape and its features.

ALM3: Protecting heritage assets by not permitting development that adversely affects features and settings of heritage assets including traditional rural buildings.

ALM5: Quality of design. Proposed development is required to respect the scale, massing, density and character of existing properties in the vicinity and respect the traditional character of the surroundings.

ALM6: Where there is good reason to believe that agricultural or other processes, may have contaminated the site an assessment of risk and remedial measures is required.

ALM16 and 17: Drainage issues and flood prevention.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NDP COMPLIANCE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Para 3.15 and ALM1: The proposal would provide additional dwellings thereby assisting meeting housing targets. However, the proposal to build 4 bed roomed houses does not sit easily with the requirement that new development meets local housing needs. The NDP public consultation exercise revealed a clear preference in the parish for 2 and 3 bed roomed homes suitable for young families with a notable wish to avoid large executive style houses. This preference was enacted in Policy ALM1(d). The proposed development site sits in a prominent position and is clearly visible for considerable distances to the N and N.E. The replacement of a group of traditional agricultural buildings with large modern houses would not retain the rural character of the parish or fit sensitively into the landscape as required by ALM1. Para 3.15 of the NDP confirms that most of the new dwellings within Almeley parish are to be located within, or adjacent to, the built up areas of

Almeley village and Woonton hamlet, both of which have defined settlement boundaries. An allowance is made for dwellings needed for agriculture, converted rural buildings, dwellings needed to support rural enterprises and affordable housing on exception sites. The development proposed in this application is therefore contrary to Policy ALM1. It also is contrary to Herefordshire Core Strategy as it constitutes development in open countryside.

The whole of Almeley Wootton lies outside of both the Almeley and Woonton settlement boundaries. It is at most a hamlet and consists at present of only a small number of scattered individual dwellings and farms defining its remote rural character. Other issues of compliance with ALM1 and ALM2, concerning sustainability, landscape, wildlife conservation, and infrastructure impact will be addressed in detail upon receipt of a full planning application should this proposal proceed. Insufficient details are given at this stage.

ALM3: There are two notable traditional half-timbered dwellings and a listed barn in close proximity to this site. The nearby Spring Grove Farm was recently the subject of planning consideration during which the Officer's report referred to it as "being of some heritage interest and of considerable age, a good example of a traditional cottage associated with a historic farmstead and therefore considered a non-designated asset". The National Planning Policy Framework advises in Para 197 that the impact of development upon the significance of non-designated assets should be taken into account in determining any planning application.

The site of the proposed dwellings also sits within the settings of the venerable 16th Century Lower Wootton Farmhouse which is a Grade II Listed Building (list entry 1157565 20/02/53) classed as a historic farmstead and the Grade II Listed Barn (list entry 1081714 16/07/87) immediately adjacent to the site. Para 193 of the NPPF states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or, **development within its setting**. Substantial harm to, or loss of, a Grade II Listed Building should be wholly exceptional. (Source: Planning Application P180889/F Appeal Decision Almeley : (09/08/19). ALM3 states that a development that adversely affects features and settings of listed buildings and other similar heritage assets will not be permitted. This proposed development should therefore be viewed as contrary to ALM3.

ALM5: Given the sensitive nature of the location, any new development so close to heritage assets would be required to demonstrate exceptional quality of design to complement the traditional character of, and to be sympathetic to its surroundings. The cumulative effect of the three applications at Almeley Wootton would, if approved, constitute a complete change to the rural nature of this sparsely populated farming community. Such a drastic injection of housing must be in conflict with the requirements of Policy ALM5 that development is required to respect the traditional character of its surroundings.

ALM6: The application form at Q6 states that there is no on-site contamination or grounds to believe that the current/former agricultural use may have involved potentially contaminating chemicals or processes. No evidence is given to support this.

ALM16 and 17: Package treatment plants are stated to be installed for foul drainage. No details of soakaway size or location are provided. Normally it is a requirement that all drainage and

soakaway systems sit within land owned and controlled by each householder. Land which has been overlain by concrete floor slabs will be heavily compacted and unlikely to accommodate soakaway drainage. A detailed assessment of soakage characteristic on this site would therefore be necessary.

OTHER RELEVANT ISSUES:

The introduction of a further 4 or 6 houses in this location would inevitably substantially increase traffic activity on the single-track Wootton Lane impacting on existing and agricultural users.

The proposal refers not to the conversion or replacement of redundant agricultural buildings but to the demolition and clearance of part of a historic farmstead used as recently as January 2021 for the housing of stock.

Despite the current housing land deficit in Herefordshire and the general presumption therefore in the NPPF in favour of sustainable development, the adverse impacts outlined above can and should be weighed against this and are significant and sufficient enough to outweigh the very limited benefits of the proposal.

ALMELEY NDP WORKING GROUP

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