

Wellington Heath Parish Council

27 Jan 2016

To HCC Planning Mr A Prior
Copy Liz Harvey

Planning application P153788 The Becks, The Common, Wellington Heath

Dear Sir,

Wellington Heath Parish Councillors are unanimously opposed to this planning application. We would however support development of this site if it respects and reinforces local distinctiveness.

The proposal fails to mention the position in the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Geopark-way and Herefordshire Trail which pass along The Common, the PRow on Ochre Hill above the east side of the site, and perhaps less importantly the listed building on Ledbury Road. Herefordshire Core Strategy policies, especially SS6 appear to have been ignored.

The application comments on the locality "immediate urban environment comprising ---- with the majority having been built since the middle of the last century." however this is not appropriate. These nearby properties were built at a time when local distinctiveness was less well studied and documented, the aim now must be to reverse the loss of distinctiveness of recent decades. The new Herefordshire Core Strategy gives much increased emphasis to local distinctiveness (see Annex to this letter)

The village of Wellington Heath has been characterised in Herefordshire Council's Landscape Character Assessment as an area of 'Forest Smallholdings and Dwellings.' This is a highly individual and rare landscape in Herefordshire which has developed from the piecemeal, opportunistic and random clearance and enclosure of former wood pasture and common over many centuries. The Malvern Hills AONB Management Plan and specifically the Malvern Hills AONB Guidance on Building Design (2013) provide both general guidance for the AONB and specific guidance for this rare landscape type within the AONB which should be followed.

Whilst we agree that the existing property has an unsympathetic extension and its restoration may not be economic, it contains within its origins insights into the distinctive character of the locality. This should be respected by restoration or in high quality new build which reinforces the local distinctiveness associated with the original cottage and locality, reinforcing the local character is especially important if the original cottage is lost.

The proposed street scene with uniform layout of driveways and plots and uniform architecture, excessive density of development, inadequate provision for vehicle parking and turning, and proximity to the adjacent property are unacceptable. The housing density in Wellington Heath would suggest that at most 2 buildings are appropriate for this site. We would also observe that bungalows and smaller properties appear to be in demand whilst some larger detached properties have remained unsold.

Whilst The Common is a rural lane it is a bus route and the key approach to the Farmers Arms pub and already suffers from parking overspill. Development must provide very generous garaging and parking, sited discretely and not necessarily adjacent to the

dwellings so as to minimise the impact of driveways on the view from the Geopark-way. Driveway must be permeable and retain the rural character, a crushed stone surface would be preferable, and must not add to the surface water rushing down The Common.

The hedgerows surrounding this site are especially important. The site rises above, and is very conspicuous from, the Geopark-way along The Common. Only a single vehicle access point should be permitted to the site. The western hedgerow has recently been neglected but can be easily restored to its former truly rural character. The yew hedge along Ochre Hill must be retained.

Whilst innovative design should not be promoted unnecessarily we would not wish to exclude it. For this site a flat roof may have merit but only if it is a living green roof. Overlooking properties north and south and the PRow above the site to the east and north must be considered. The Pasiv Haus energy efficiency standard is commendable, however we note that it can be successfully applied to traditional designs and must not be an unnecessary excuse for detracting from local distinctiveness.

C F Rozelaar
Chair of Wellington Heath parish council planning committee

Extract of sections on Distinctiveness and AONBs from Herefordshire Core Strategy

Policies are reproduced in their entirety, relevant sections are taken from paragraphs.

Para 1.28 "---- joint working via the AONB partnerships and implementation of the AONB management plans."

Para 2.24 "Large tracts of this landscape are of high quality with the Wye Valley and the Malvern Hills having national AONB designation"

Para 3.14 "**Vision for Environmental Quality in Herefordshire** 3.14 New development will be designed and constructed in ways to ensure that local distinctiveness is reinforced. ----"

Figure 3.1 "**Strategic Objectives - Environmental Quality - 10** - To achieve sustainable communities and protect the environment by delivering well-designed places, spaces and buildings, which use land efficiently, reinforce local distinctiveness and are supported by the necessary infrastructure including green infrastructure.

Para 3.95 "--- New development will provide for a range of type and size of sustainably constructed and well-designed buildings to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, contribute to climate change adaptation, enhance energy efficiency and respect local distinctiveness"

Para 3.93 "In undertaking assessment the values attached to local distinctiveness by local communities can include social and economic perceptions as well as environmental characteristics. Where produced, local guidance should inform the design process. A series of documents exist that provide planning guidance and advice on biodiversity, archaeology and landscape character. Management plans have been prepared for both Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the county and conservation objectives set for sites of international and national biodiversity interest."

Policy SS6 "Environmental quality and local distinctiveness - Development proposals should conserve and enhance those environmental aspects that contribute towards the county's distinctiveness, in particular its settlement pattern, landscape, biodiversity and heritage assets and especially those with specific environmental designations. In addition proposals should maintain and improve the effectiveness of those ecosystems essential to the health of the well being of the county's residents and its economy. Development proposals should be shaped through an integrated approach to planning the following environmental components from the outset, and based on sufficient information to determine the effect upon each where they are relevant:

- landscape, townscape and local distinctiveness, especially in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- biodiversity and geodiversity especially Special Areas of Conservation and Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- historic environmental and heritage assets, especially Scheduled Monuments and Listed Buildings;
- the network of green infrastructure;
- local amenity, including light pollution, air quality and tranquillity;
- agricultural and food productivity;
- physical resources, including minerals, soils, management of waste, the water environment, renewable energy and energy conservation.

The management plans and conservation objectives of the county's international and nationally important features and areas will be material to the determination of future development proposals. Furthermore assessments of local features, areas and sites,

defining local distinctiveness in other development plan documents, neighbourhood development plans and supplementary planning documents should inform decisions upon proposals."

Para 3.99 "Management Plans have been prepared for both the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills Areas of Outstanding Beauty. These documents will be relevant to assessment of the effects of development upon these important assets. The most rigorous approaches to assessing the effect of development should be taken for those areas with international and national designations, including proposals outside but having an effect upon them, in accordance with the protection afforded to such areas in the National Planning Policy Framework. Sites and Features of local importance should also receive an appropriate level of protection when determining the effects of proposals upon the environment and local distinctiveness. Subsequent policies set out the approach that should be applied in relation to these and a number of supplementary planning documents are also referred in their supporting statement which will also be relevant. Appendix 8 provides a list of those which have been identified at the time of drafting this Core Strategy"

Para 3.107 "**Key outcomes of the strategy for environmental quality** 3.107 These comprise: recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; respecting local distinctiveness; funding new green infrastructure; and addressing the causes and impacts of climate change. These link to Core Strategy objectives 10,11 and 12."

Para 4.5.2 Relates specifically to Ledbury

Policy LB1 Relates specifically to Ledbury

Policy LB2 Relates specifically to Ledbury "----- respects the setting and significance of the listed viaduct and the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty"

Para 4.8.17 "Given the importance of the Herefordshire landscape, and particularly the Malvern Hills and the Wye Valley Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, new dwellings should make a positive contribution to their rural landscape by being built to a high standard, incorporating appropriate materials and landscaping."

Para 4.8.43 "The Wye valley AONB and the Malvern Hills AONB are recognised by the National Planning Policy Framework as areas where development should be restricted. Guidance on proposed developments in AONBs is set out in Paragraph 116 of the NPPF. Policy LD1 of this plan also sets out guidance on how development proposals should seek to safeguard the character and appearance of these areas."

Para 5.2.20 "The Herefordshire STEAM report shows that tourism makes an important contribution to the county's economy. Herefordshire has many historic and natural assets which are of national interest for example the Mappa Mundi and the Wye Valley Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Hereford, the market towns and rural areas are popular destinations for a range of different types of visits and activities. Tourism in Herefordshire can help to strengthen the economy through diversification and new business development in both urban and rural areas."

Para 5.3 "**Environmental quality**

1. **Local distinctiveness**
2. **Sustainable design**"

Paras 5.3.2 to 5.3.5 "**Local Distinctiveness**

5.3.2 To successfully deliver the Core Strategy vision in respect of environmental quality and local distinctiveness, this section provides a proactive strategy for the conservation, restoration and enhancement of environmental assets and the delivery of new green infrastructure to support policies SS6 and SS7.

5.3.3 Locally distinctive assets both natural and man made, are finite and irreplaceable and any detrimental impacts can carry cultural, environmental, economic and social costs. A number of assets benefit from designations within national and international legislation. Statutory designations range from large areas conserved for landscape, geodiversity and biodiversity importance, such as the Wye Valley and Malvern Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and River Wye Special Area of Conservation, to individual statutory listed buildings which are protected for their architectural or historic significance. Appendix 8 lists the designated sites in Herefordshire at the time of adoption.

5.3.4 Non-statutory designations and locally determined features are equally important to Herefordshire's local distinctiveness. Working with partner organisations, Herefordshire Council has identified important assets such as local wildlife sites, local geological sites and areas and buildings of local interest which contribute to Herefordshire's unique character. Non-statutory locally distinctive buildings and green spaces will be identified through forthcoming Development Plan Documents or Neighbourhood Development Plans.

5.3.5 Conserving local distinctiveness is central to the purposes of designations at all levels and achieved substantially through the production and implementation of management plans, conservation strategies and objectives and guidance resulting from best practise and local assessments."

Policy LD1 "Landscape and Townscape - Development proposals should -

- demonstrate that character of landscape and townscape has positively influenced the design, scale, nature and site selection, protection and enhancement of the setting of settlements and designated areas;
- conserve and enhance the natural, historic and scenic beauty of important landscapes and features, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, nationally and locally designated parks and gardens and conservation areas; through the protection of the area's character and by enabling appropriate uses, design and management;
- incorporate new landscape schemes and their management to ensure development integrates appropriately into its surroundings; and
- maintain and extend tree cover where important to amenity, through the retention of important trees, appropriate replacement trees lost through development and new planting to support green infrastructure."

5.3.19 "----. Development can include corridors for movement through foot and cycle paths. It provides opportunities for improving the management of and interpreting natural and heritage assets and how they contribute to local distinctiveness. Increased access to green infrastructure can promote physical and mental health well-being."

Policy SD1 "Sustainable design and energy efficiency - Development proposals should create safe, sustainable, well integrated environments for all members of the community. In conjunction with this, all development proposals should incorporate the following requirements :-

- ensure that proposals make efficient use of land - taking into account the local context and site characteristics,
- new buildings should be designed to maintain local distinctiveness through incorporating local architectural detailing and materials and respecting scale, height, proportions and massing of surrounding development, while making a positive

contribution to the architectural diversity and character of the area including, where appropriate, through innovative design;

- safeguard residential amenity for existing and proposed residents;
- ensure new development does not contribute to, or suffer from, adverse impacts arising from noise, light or air contamination, land instability or cause ground water pollution;
- where contaminated land is present undertake appropriate remediation where it can be demonstrated that this will be effective;
- ensure that distinctive features of existing buildings and their setting are safeguarded and where appropriate, restored;
- utilise physical sustainability measures that include in particular, orientation of buildings, the provision of water conservation measures, storage for bicycles and waste including provision for recycling, and enabling renewable energy and energy conservation infrastructure;
- where possible, on-site renewable energy generation should also be incorporated;
- create safe and accessible environments, that minimise opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour by incorporating Secure By Design principles, and consider the incorporation of fire safety measures;
- ensure designs can be easily adapted and accommodate new technologies to meet changing needs throughout the lifetime of the development; and
- utilise sustainable construction methods which minimise the use of non-renewable resources and maximise the use of recycled and sustainably sourced materials;

All planning applications including material changes of use, will be expected to demonstrate how the above design and energy efficiency considerations have been factored into the proposal from the outset."