

## **Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group – Meeting March 26<sup>th</sup> – Agenda Item 4 – Local Plan**

### **Summary of Points Relevant to Dorstone**

The latest version of the Herefordshire Local Plan (previously called the Local Development Framework) introduces a revised policy with regard to housing development in Rural Areas. This is important as the Local Plan, together with the National Planning Policy framework, is the basis upon which Planners will make their future decisions.

The main features of the new policy are

1. Increasing the housing provision in rural areas in the plan period 2011-2031 from 4,500 to 5,300. This total is broken down into 724 homes already committed, a windfall allowance of 1000, leaving 3576 as sites which would be enabled through Neighbourhood Developments Plans etc.
2. The previous policy of concentrating new housing in so called Rural Services Centres (eg. Peterchurch) and hubs (e.g. Dorstone) has been dropped. In its place a more flexible policy based on so called “housing market areas” – the Golden Valley being one of 7 “HMAs” in the county. Taking into account a variety of factors each HMA is allocated a % growth figure for new housing, in the case of the Golden Valley this is 12% which is equivalent to 304 new homes.
3. Villages are divided into 2 groups. We are included in the list of larger settlements, with services, which will have the opportunity for housing growth that is proportionate to their existing size. The second group are smaller villages, (more than 20 dwellings) where proportional housing growth will be restricted to smaller market housing which meets the needs of people with local connections. The size of any new houses in this second category would also be restricted, e.g. 3 bedroom house could be no more than 90sq metres.
4. The introduction of targets is not designed as an absolute, to quote Para 5.26 “*these targets will inform*

*the preparation of emerging Neighbourhood Plans to enable communities to identify appropriate sites to accommodate growth proportionate to their village. The indicator represents a target which individual communities can aim to meet or potentially exceed depending on their particular aspirations and environmental constraints".* In our case applying the 12% growth figure a target would be 11/12 new homes during the plan period until 2031, less than one per year.

5. There is specific reference in the case of the Golden Valley to two thirds of market housing being 3 bedroom with a further third of smaller units
6. The issue of settlement boundaries is left open for communities to decide as part of neighbourhood plans. The new policy RA2 however refers to residential development being considered locally appropriate through 5 factors, including such factors as providing an appropriate mix of dwelling, reflects the character of the Village as well as being in accordance with the neighbourhood plan.
7. Outside the Villages named in the strategy it is intended that new housing will be strictly controlled to *"avoid unsustainable patterns of development which result in isolated sporadic development at the expense of the landscape and environment."* This is partly based on a national policy which states that isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided. There are, as now, some exceptions:-
  - Dwellings supporting the rural economy, such as those required for essential rural workers
  - Dwellings necessary for the growth of rural enterprises.
  - Replacement dwellings
  - The conversion of redundant rural buildings, e.g. Barns
  - Rural exception housing for affordable homes
  - Dwellings of exceptional quality and design achieving a zero carbon building.

## **General Comment**

Having read the main document of the Local Plan and the background paper on Rural Housing which forms the basis of the Rural policy proposals, it is worth considering where neighbourhood planning fits in with this detailed set of planning proposals for Herefordshire.

It is summed up quite well by paragraph 3.4 of the Rural Housing Paper:-

*“Herefordshire Council recognises the potential of neighbourhood planning and is committed to providing technical advice and support as neighbourhoods draw up their plans. The Core Strategy will strategically outline countywide levels of housing and a methodology of how this will be distributed and delivered. Neighbourhood Development Plans will identify appropriate sites and formulate policy to accommodate growth within their communities in general conformity with the Core Strategy”*

In other words the Core Strategy potentially provides us with a framework within which we can work. A Nil growth option cannot be a basis for our Plan, however the scale, type and location/ or criteria governing location, of any new housing forms an important part of our remit. In addition of course there are the other issues which will fall within our Plan, landscape, open spaces, infrastructure, renewable energy, tourism, employment and business etc.

Colin  
23 March 2013