

Response of Dorstone Parish Council to the final consultation on Herefordshire Council's Local Plan – April 2013.

Having read and considered the latest version of Herefordshire Council's Core Strategy 2011-2031 in broad terms we welcome the changes that have been made to the document, particularly the dropping of the concept of Rural Service centres and Hubs and the slight relaxation of rules governing the development of smaller villages.

We would like to make the following specific comments in relation to Rural Area proposals and their impact on our Parish. We have not considered the wider proposals in the County.

1. We consider the revised scale of housing development in rural areas as a broadly acceptable basis for County wide Planning purposes. Using a % growth target for each HMA does give Parish Councils some guidance on possible growth levels in their area. However such growth targets must be viewed in the context of the development of Neighbourhood Plans. It is vital that Parishes have the ability to carry out meaningful consultations with their communities on the scale of new housing development, and that the Local Plan targets do not take precedence over the results of Neighbourhood Plan outcomes. In simple terms, whilst recognising that no growth is not an option, Parishes must retain the ability in their neighbourhood Plans to adopt a scale of development which reflects their communities wishes as eventually expressed in their adopted neighbourhood plans.
2. We welcome the flexibility granted to Parish Councils to adopt Settlement Boundaries as part of the neighbourhood planning process, we feel this is an important aspect of controlling the development of the Village Area and in maintaining the open spaces which are such an important feature of Dorstone's character.
3. The controls on housing in open countryside are welcomed. The Parish Council has experienced difficulties in the past, with landowners who wish to build in open countryside and use rules which allow temporary accommodation, as a stepping stone, to eventually establish permanent residences. Enforcement on these kinds of development is vital if the credibility of the planning process is to be maintained.
4. The Council appreciates that the Local Plan is a strategic document for the period until 2031 but is it the intention of the Herefordshire Council to be reviewed the period, particularly if stated housing targets are met earlier than those set out in the Plan?
5. There is one point of detail in the table in the supporting Rural Housing Background paper – p29 Golden Valley Rural HMA

Housing Target paper. Dorstone is shown as having a village shop, as has been pointed out in previous correspondence, "the Dorstone Front Room" is a community room which amongst many things sells odd items of food, but this cannot be viewed as a Village Shop in the traditional sense, selling a wide range of goods. For example anyone without public transport could not rely on this facility to provide their basic needs, they would have to travel by public transport to Peterchurch or Hay.

6. There are two points of Planning process which are not covered in the Local Plan but have at times a significant impact on planning outcomes. Firstly the material change process, where following the granting of planning permission, applicants submit changes for approval by Planning Officers. We feel that Parish Councils should be notified and consulted on such changes. This will be particularly important when Neighbourhood Plans are in place. Secondly the criteria for reference of applications to the full Planning Committee should be publicised. It appears that this is often a matter of judgement by Ward Councillors, and it would be better in our view if there would some published ground rules governing such references.

Chris Hendy – Clerk on behalf of Dorstone Parish Council