

Allensmore Neighbourhood Development Plan

Report for Parish Council 25th July 2019

Steering Group and meetings

Since the last Parish Council meeting, we have had one meeting of the Steering Group on 15th July 2019. No members of the public were present. The planned June meeting was cancelled due to being part way through the Regulation 14 consultation.

No changes to the Steering Group.

Finance

We are within the overall budget. There is a minor outstanding query with the latest invoice that we are endeavouring to resolve.

NDP Regulation 14 Consultation

Following the Parish Council's approval at the last meeting, the draft Neighbourhood Development Plan was submitted to Herefordshire Council and other "statutory consultees" for formal public consultation under Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning, England, Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The consultation period was from Monday 27th May 2019 to Friday 12th July 2019 – the period being 6 weeks and 5 days.

We had a total of 23 responses, 7 from the statutory consultees and 16 from the public.

Statutory Consultees:

1. Herefordshire Council

Key comments from the various Council departments include:

- Neighbourhood planning: "overall the plan is well written and well researched It is clear that the plan takes a positive approach towards identifying settlement boundaries and allocation of housing in line with the Core Strategy".
- All our draft policies are deemed to be in conformity with the Core Strategy of Herefordshire Council.
- Draft Policy A7 (Draining Flooding and Sewage) was noted as being generic. In response, the Steering Group agreed to include the Environment Agency Surface and River Flood Risk Maps for our area. However, Welsh Water particularly welcomed this policy (see below).
- Air, land and water protection: It was noted that some of our recommended sites for development have had former uses and therefore "may have been exposed to contamination". The Steering Group agreed to add the following statement to policies A4 (Criteria for development) and A6 (conversion of former agricultural buildings): "Consideration should be given to the possibility of encountering contamination on sites as a result of former uses and specialist advice be sought should any be encountered".

2. Kilpeck Parish Council

This neighbouring parish supports the Allensmore Regulation 14 Draft Plan, especially as site 14 abuts a settlement pocket within the boundary of Kilpeck parish. They also had favourable comments on the quality of the plan.

3. Welsh Water

State that they “are supportive of the aims, objectives and policies set out” in the draft plan. They are “particularly welcoming of Policy A7 [on drainage, flooding and sewage] including the specific criterion on the requirement for SuDs”.

4. Environment Agency

They advised we should take note of the surface water flooding risk. The Steering Group had already agreed to include flood risk maps in the NDP in response to Herefordshire Council’s comments and felt that this action also covered the Environment Agency’s comments. These maps have been referred to throughout the process so far.

5. Historic England

There were positive comments from this body about the commitment to support well designed, locally distinctive development that is sympathetic to the character of the area, including its rural landscape character, heritage assets and green spaces.

6. Natural England

No specific comments made by this body.

7. Coal Authority

No specific comments made by this body.

Public Responses:

The Steering Group discussed at length all 16 public responses. A large majority were extremely supportive which is very pleasing to report.

Several commented on the draft settlement boundaries, suggesting amendments to extend the boundaries to include land owned by the respondents. These were discussed at length at the Steering Group meeting on July 15th and there was a unanimous decision not to enlarge any of the settlement boundaries. There are several reasons for this decision:

- The draft settlement boundaries were originally drawn up in discussions with Kirkwells and Herefordshire Council consultants and are endorsed by Herefordshire Council in their Regulation 14 consultation response.
- We wish to retain the character of the settlements and reject any “double depth” development – policies that are fully supported by local residents in previous consultations
- One of the sites that was suggested for inclusion came forward during the call for sites process and was deemed to be unsuitable by the independent assessors AECOM, whose report was formally and unanimously accepted by the Steering Group.
- None of the other suggested areas came forward during the call for sites process.
- The draft NDP already delivers the minimum growth target with additional contingency.
- The draft settlement boundaries were overwhelmingly supported by local residents in previous consultations.
- There are considerable drainage challenges in some of the areas where respondents have suggested changes.

All the returns have now been published on the Allensmore Parish Council website together with the Steering Group’s responses.

Next Actions

The next stage is to prepare the submission to Herefordshire Council for them to carry out the Regulation 16 Consultation. We need to prepare three documents:

1. Draft NDP: The small changes following the Regulation 14 consultation have been approved by the Steering Group and incorporated. The document will now be sent to Kirkwells for them to prepare the Regulation 16 version.
2. Consultation Statement: This document describes the process we have undertaken together with evidence amassed. Kirkwells have produced a first draft and we have provided more input for them to complete the preparation.
3. Conditions Statement: This document shows how our draft NDP meets all the conditions set out in the Town & Country Planning Act. First draft has been prepared by Kirkwells.

We plan to ratify final versions of these three documents at our next Steering Group meeting on 19th August 2019 and submit them to the Parish Council for approval at their meeting on 19th September 2019. Once approved, the documents will be submitted to Herefordshire Council. Herefordshire Council will proceed as follows:

- Regulation 16: a further 6 weeks consultation
- Invite applications from examiners on the national panel
- Appoint an examiner and submit Allensmore's plan for examination
- Make any changes the examiner requires
- Organise a referendum for residents of our designated area.

Recent Planning Applications

It is disappointing to note that although the draft NDP has completed the Regulation 14 stage and we feel has full support of a large majority of residents, our policies played no part in a recent planning application decision when a site, deemed unsuitable in the AECOM report, was given outline planning approval. We were led to believe that a draft NDP at Regulation 14 stage *did* have some weight in Herefordshire Council decision making. This underlines the importance of completing the process and urging residents to adopt the NDP in the referendum: an adopted NDP will be much more difficult for Herefordshire Council to ignore.

Appendix 5: Non-planning matters arising from the NDP

Separate updates.

Nick Chapman, 25th July 2019