

CHADDESLEY CORBETT PARISH COUNCIL

Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) Local Plan (2016 - 2036) - Submission to the Local Plan Examination – Matter 3; housing and employment land requirements

Introduction

This submission responds to the following question posed on page 3 of document ED16, Matters and Questions for the Examination:

3.4 Should a housing requirement figure for each of the designated neighbourhood plan areas be set out in the Plan?

Background

The Wyre Forest Parish of Chaddesley Corbett is one of (currently) two areas within WFDC covered by a made Neighbourhood Plan (NP). The Plan covers the whole Parish, which is washed over by the Green Belt. The Parish includes two Conservation Areas, one of which covers the main Village.

The table below illustrates the scale of the Neighbourhood Plan area compared to that of the Wyre Forest District.

	Wyre Forest	Chaddesley Corbett	Parish as % of WFDC
Population	101, 291	1,422	1.4%
Area (Ha)	19,425	2,428	12.5%
No of dwellings	47,528	691	1.5%

This underlines the rural character of the Parish, its position in the Green Belt, and the extent of land area given over to Agriculture and natural green spaces. The Parish has an exceptionally high quality natural environment, with a number of designated sites which are already given protection. These include Chaddesley Woods NNR (National Nature Reserve) and SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and three Special Wildlife Sites.

Response

Neighbourhood Plans across the country are very varied in terms of the area/population covered and the character of the location, ranging from very sparsely populated areas of national parks to densely populated fringes of cities. It seems unlikely that any standardised basis of target setting for housing requirements would be appropriate. Additionally, any 'top-down' apportionment from relevant Planning Authorities would likely represent a 'reductio ad absurdum', especially in those NP areas with small geographic areas and/or small populations.

The Chaddesley Corbett NP includes a commitment to work with the Planning Authority to identify suitable sites for affordable housing. This reflects the emphasis that being in the Green Belt places on restricting development to brown field or exception sites, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. When planning at this 'micro' level, the actual timing of any need materialising (eg families starting or downsizing) and the occurrence of an opportunity to meet it (eg barn conversions, vacation of a brownfield site or the identification of an exception site) will only arise on an ad hoc basis.

Recent experience suggests that any calculation of need or targeted provision on such a small scale represents a level of spurious accuracy. The former school site was identified for redevelopment in the current NP, and 14 new homes were built, ranging from 1 to 3 bedrooms, as indicated by the survey of needs conducted in preparation for the NP. In the event, two properties are occupied by residents that moved within the Parish, others are occupied by people new to the Parish, and several were bought on a 'buy to rent' basis.

Due to the economics of redeveloping the former school site, no affordable homes were delivered. As part of the current review and update of the Chaddesley Corbett NP, the Council has conducted a call for sites, and is seeking to identify one or more Rural Exception Sites suitable for ten affordable homes, as indicated by the most recent Needs survey.

In a later stage of the Public Examination, the Parish Council will submit its objections to the draft Local Plan's allocation of a small greenfield site within the Chaddesley Corbett Village Conservation Area – a site recently submitted and reviewed (but not supported) as part of the Parish Call for Sites exercise. The revised Neighbourhood Plan is expected to identify one or more alternative locations for potential Rural Exception Sites.

We therefore conclude that collaboration and dialogue between the Neighbourhood and Local Plan bodies will be more meaningful than setting housing requirements for each NP Area. This has the added advantage of avoiding difficulties arising from the differences in timing and timescale of the NP and Local Plans, as they will rarely be concluded on the same timescale. We anticipate that this conclusion would apply similarly to all but the very largest Neighbourhood Plan areas across the country.

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31 October 2020