

Cllr Adrian Smith
Chairman
Alvechurch Parish
Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

30th November 2017

Dear Cllr Smith

RE: Alvechurch Neighbourhood Plan - Pre-submission consultation

Worcestershire County Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the above consultation. The following officer-only response is from our Ecology, Landscape, Historic Environment, Education and Strategic Planning officers. Other Worcestershire County Council teams may choose to make their own response.

If you would like to discuss any of these comments please do not hesitate to contact Marta Dziudzi (email: mdziudzi@worcestershire.gov.uk, telephone 01905 846794) in the first instance.

Yours Sincerely,

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General comments

We are pleased that our earlier comments and recommendations have been taken into account in this draft of the Neighbourhood Plan. In particular, we welcome the broadening of Policy 14 to include more habitat types and incorporation of various suggestions in relation to historic environment and landscape. As such, we think that this document is well informed and represents a good understanding of multiple matters including green infrastructure.

We do, however, provide a few comments and suggestions in relation to education and health and wellbeing.

Education

Worcestershire County Council's Children, Families and Communities Department note that the parish council place significant importance on the need for school places in the area with a number of references throughout the consultation document.

As a commissioner of school places, we will continue to work with schools serving the local area to protect and enhance school assets and playing fields, in line with Government policies on the delivery of statutory education provision.

Where planned housing development has been identified, we will continue to monitor housing growth in and around the local area and respond appropriately to ensure a sufficiency of school places. Where necessary, developer contributions will be sought to mitigate the impact of housing development and demographic growth within the area.

Health and Wellbeing

APNP Policy 15

We welcome that one of the key aims of the Neighbourhood Plan includes improving quality of life and health and wellbeing of the communities. We also welcome the

inclusion of APNP Policy 15 which seems comprehensive, covering good design, green spaces, walking, cycling and health facilities.

We consider that this policy could benefit from a change to the title. "The provision and improvement of health care facilities" seems to indicate that the sole focus of this policy is health care facilities whilst actually this policy is much wider. Some more suited title examples include "Healthy environments and health care facilities" or "Improvements to health and wellbeing and health care provision" etc.

Age-friendly neighbourhoods

The Neighbourhood Plan states that "*the 2011 national census revealed that the Neighbourhood Area has an ageing population*". Key Aim 1 is to deliver "*development that meets current and future needs of all age groups in a changing and growing Alvechurch parish community, whilst embracing high quality design*" which is further expanded in relation to affordable housing, Lifetime Homes design standards and facilities and services for the ageing population. The provision of age and dementia friendly outdoor environments could also be covered in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Older people require supportive and enabling living environments to compensate for the physical and social changes associated with ageing. These changing needs may include reduced mobility, physical disability, and chronic diseases, as well as psycho-emotional concerns such as stress and isolation.

Whilst dementia can affect people as young as 30, the prevalence rate increases significantly with age. Dementia affects cognitive, sensory, social, emotional and physical functions. As a result people may experience problems in gathering their thoughts and in concentrating, as well as in the way they experience and interact with the external environment.

The built environment can reduce these risks and help in ensuring that the elderly and people living with dementia can stay longer within their communities by enabling social

interaction, encouraging physical activity and connecting people with places and other people. This could take the following forms:

- Provision of accessible open spaces and walkable neighbourhoods
- Provision of safe, well-lit and well-maintained routes and places
- Provision of pathways containing seating areas in strategic places to help people gather their thoughts and located under street trees to allow shading during hot weather
- Segregated walking and cycling paths
- Use of plain and non-reflective road/path surfaces
- Neighbourhoods/new developments to be well signed using a tonal contrast of colours with a clear and simple font

HIAs

We also welcome that the Neighbourhood Plan requires HIAs for major developments. We suggest that this policy or its supporting text specifies what issues are required to be covered as part of an HIA. We note that this policy puts an emphasis on the demand off and access to healthcare services but this may shift the focus from other important issues such creating permeable environments, providing and maintaining green spaces, design age-friendly neighbourhoods etc. We note that the Plan directs applicants to the Worcestershire County Council's Health Impact Assessment in Planning Toolkit guide. We suggest that an on-line link to this document is provided ([Health Impact Assessments in Planning Toolkit for Worcestershire](#)).

Other relevant background documents that you may find useful:

- South Worcestershire Authorities (2017) [Planning for Health in South Worcestershire Supplementary Planning Document](#) – this is a South Worcestershire wide document but most of these issues are transferable. HIAs are recommended in this document to assess the health and wellbeing impacts of new development.

- [Public Health England \(2017\) Spatial Planning for Health An evidence resource for planning and designing healthier places](#) - this is a national guidance document on health and wellbeing and planning.

Detailed comments

- We suggest that policies in the Plan are provided within coloured boxes whilst any references to community actions and key aims are kept in a different format to distinguish from policies as the current layout seems a little confusing.
- Page 44 – APNP POLICY 8: NEW HOUSING, IMPROVED SERVICES AND FACILITIES
- Page 54 - APNP POLICY 11: THE ALVECHURCH PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT PARISH DESIGN STATEMENT (APDS)
- 4.1.108 – "Building" lifetime homes could be replaced with "Building new homes that meet the design standards of Lifetime Homes". Some reference or a link to the [Lifetime Homes standards website](#) could also be added to provide more clarity on this matter.