

Pencombe Group Neighbourhood Development Plan

Final Integrated Draft Vision, Objectives and Key Planning Themes

Introduction

An NDP workshop was held on Tuesday 11th January 2022 in the evening in the village hall for all those who had expressed an interest in getting involved following the NDP launch on 22nd November 2021.

The workshop was well attended by parishioners, with around 35 local people from Pencombe, Little Cowarne and the wider rural area taking part. Five groups of around six to eight people discussed their priorities for the NDP and the future of the Parish, noted them on flip charts and fed back on these to the wider group at the end.

A first draft of a Vision, Objectives and Key Planning Themes for the NDP based on the discussions at the workshop was then produced by Kirkwells. This first draft was then reviewed by residents at a further workshop on 21st February 2022 and changes and improvements to the first draft were made.

This paper is the result of these changes made to the first draft and represents a final draft of the NDP Vision, Objectives and Key Planning Themes.

Work can now be progressed on the Draft Plan.

Draft Vision

In 2031 (or could be 2041 to coincide with the Core Strategy Review period) the parishes of Pencombe & Little Cowarne will have a high-quality environment which is valued and enjoyed by all.

Its beautiful rural character of rolling hills and river valleys, native woodland, arable farmland and pasture scattered farmsteads and cottages will be conserved and enhanced.

The area's dark skies will be protected from light pollution. Community facilities and local transport will be improved, with a focus on accessibility for all and reduced reliance on the car.

Of the two Parishes Pencombe village will be the focus of any new housing development, with mixed, low density, small scale housing provision which meets the expressed requirements of all age groups and contributes to a robust and sustainable local community.

Developments will be sensitive to local character whilst actively embracing resource and energy efficiency as part of measures to contribute to a low or zero carbon future.

Of the two Parishes, Pencombe village will be the focus of any new housing development, with mixed low density, small scale provision that meet the expressed requirements of all age groups and contribute to a robust and sustainable local community.

Draft NDP Objectives

Objective 1 – To conserve and enhance the natural environment by ensuring any new development is sensitive to the Parishes rural landscape character and enhances local biodiversity and wildlife.

Objective 2 – To protect local built character and heritage by ensuring any new development (including changes to any existing building) and farming practices are sensitive to the local context and is of a suitable scale, density and design.

Objective 3 - To promote a stronger sense of community within the Parishes by protecting valued existing local facilities and supporting provision of new local community facilities. New facilities could include a new public open space / village green including areas for young people and children. Use of existing facilities should be improved including the Parish Hall and the many footpaths in the Parishes.

Objective 4 – To provide a suitable, sustainable and affordable mixture of new housing which meets the current and future needs of local residents, particularly family housing, housing for smaller households and self-build opportunities. Innovative approaches such as Community Land Trust can assist in meeting housing needs.

Objective 5 – To improve accessibility for all by maintaining public rights of way, improving public transport provision, making rural roads safer and reducing reliance on the private car.

Objective 6 – To support appropriate investment in rural diversification, with a focus on small scale local businesses and appropriate tourism. Improvements in digital communications and other infrastructure must continue to ensure community life is sustainable.

Proposed Key Planning Themes for Pencombe Group NDP

Natural Environment

This chapter would describe the local landscape character of the parish in more detail, with descriptions from both published material (eg Natural England's National Landscape Character Areas, Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment SPD) and local (parish level) knowledge of the Group.

The chapter would describe the darks skies, water courses, and important habitats and wildlife diversity.

Note could be made of current phosphate issues etc.

Policies would set out how habitats and wildlife would be protected from development and could identify possible projects in the Parish for biodiversity net gain. Consideration could be given to mapping local wildlife networks and corridors e.g. water courses, traditional hedgerows, PRoW etc

Built Character

This chapter would describe existing built character i.e. scale, design, materials etc. and would note any heritage assets (listed buildings etc.)

If the Parish Council decides to commission Design Codes from Locality (through the Technical Support route) then these would include a detailed local character assessment and design codes for new development. The design codes would be used to inform detailed NDP policies on design.

Community

This would describe existing provision in the parish (church, Parish hall, school, pubs) and could identify the facilities on a map.

Service provision can help build the community so this section could describe gaps in existing provision and include proposals for new facilities. Examples of desirable new facilities could be- car park, play area, community shop/vending machine which would be supported in a planning policy.

If the Parish Council decides to include a site for a new play area, where could this go? Could local landowners be approached? Does the Parish Council or school have any suitable land in the village? Otherwise a policy could encourage provision as part of a new housing development perhaps based around the Community Infrastructure Levy/S106

Evidence would be needed e.g. through public consultation, for proposals for new facilities such as a play area / community hub.

Housing

This chapter would set out the planning policy context and need for new housing provision in line with village amenities, drawing on the adopted Core Strategy and any more up to date evidence from Herefordshire Council.

If the Parish Council decides to include site allocations in the NDP it would need to progress a 'call for sites'. All submitted sites would be subjected to a technical assessment (this is provided by consultants AECOM through the Locality Technical Support program). Sites which are found to be suitable or suitable subject to constraints being overcome, can be published for public consultation, and the Parish Council can determine which, if any sites should be included in the NDP.

Note – the Core Strategy only identifies the village of Pencombe as suitable for new market housing (see Fig 4.14 p109). This means in practice that a settlement boundary will be drawn around the built-up area and any site allocations will be within this boundary. Both the settlement boundary and site allocations will be shown on the NDP 'Policies Map'.

Outside Pencombe village, the rest of the Parish is identified as 'Herefordshire's countryside' or 'rural area'. Core Strategy policies set out the limited circumstances where new development may be acceptable here in Policies RA3, RA4, RA5 and RA6.

If the Group considers that Little Cowarne should also support some new housing then this needs to be discussed with Herefordshire Council. Policy RA3 allows for some 'rural exception' housing in line with Policy H2 i.e. local need affordable housing. So, the PC could for instance, include this in the 'call for sites' but make it clear that it is for local needs affordable housing only.

Herefordshire Council may suggest a local parish housing needs survey to provide the evidence for this. (See also the Iceni report in the PPA document, but this only looks at the Bromyard rural housing area and does not go into detail at the parish level).

Affordable housing can only be required on market housing schemes of 10 or more houses and this is subject to viability. Therefore if your site allocations are for less than 10 houses then it is unlikely that they would deliver any affordable housing.

Design codes could also be used for housing sites and to promote sustainable design in all developments.

Accessibility

This chapter would describe existing issues eg PRow, bus services, rural lanes and conflicts with pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders etc. In practice NDP policies can do little to improve existing problems but they can steer developments to the most accessible locations and encourage linkages to PRow. The chapter could also identify specific actions for the Parish Council to tackle problems / concerns of residents but this is not really part of the main NDP. Examiners like to see actions set out in an Appendix.

The workshop included references to:

- encouraging car sharing
- EV charging points
- slowing traffic down
- white gates
- improving bus services
- community transport schemes.

Business and Infrastructure

This would describe existing businesses and local employment. Core Strategy Policy RA6 covers new development quite comprehensively so the Group would need to consider whether there is anything to add to this e.g. support for a village shop / farm shop / conversions for offices / extensions for home working etc. It may be that you decide not to address this in the NDP if there is nothing new to say.