

MINUTES OF

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF YARKHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Held Tuesday 22nd October 2019 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillor Jeff Hughes, Councillor Tom Misselbrook, Councillor Matthew Kirby, Councillor Sarah Daw and Parish clerk Sallyanne Lees.

There were 17 members of the public present.

1. Apologies received from Councillor Chrissie Dobson and Councillor Ian Carr
2. There were no declarations of interest or written requests for dispensations
3. To discuss Planning Application 193382 – Land Adjacent to Council Houses in Monkhide.

A lengthy discussion took place with many comments from the floor. It was unanimously agreed that the Parish Council would object to the application and the submission to Herefordshire Council Planning Department was made as follows:

“The application represents a second attempt by the developer to erect housing on this greenfield site in Monkhide. The initial application met with strong opposition from Yarkhill residents and the Parish Council following which it was firmly refused by Herefordshire Council in June 2018. This latest application proposes a reconfiguration of the housing mix in order to secure approval on the basis of a rural exception, but no amount of reworking will overcome the crucial fact that development on this site is inappropriate and contrary to the wishes of the PC and local community. The applicant has also failed to sufficiently address the material reasons for the previous refusal.

It is particularly disturbing that the application seeks to override the NDP. This is only 13 months old, having been made on 25th September 2018, and is accredited as having full material weight in relation to any planning application within the parish. The NDP is fully aligned with the Core Strategy and NPPF and it is not surprising therefore that the application fails policies inherent in both documents. A number of the supporting statements in the application intimate that the sole issue at stake is the site being outside the Monkhide Settlement Boundary whereas the reality is rather different in that this is just one area of many where the application is in direct conflict with the NDP.

A meeting was held by the Parish Council on 22nd October to discuss the application which a majority of local residents attended. The view of the audience, without dissent, was that the development is incompatible with Monkhide as a small secluded countryside hamlet and should not be permitted. The overwhelming sentiment was that the application merely repeats and aggravates the faults of its predecessor.

Rural Exception Sites

The provision of affordable housing under a rural exception is intended to be community led being a consultative process involving local people and the parish council and not, as seems to be the case here, a veiled attempt by a developer to force through unwanted dwellings. There has been no consultation with the PC or community at any stage and we are surprised that no pre-application advice was sought from Herefordshire Council especially given the type of housing proposed and the unequivocal nature of the previous refusal. The developer might argue that the Housing Needs Survey represents adequate consultation with the village, but this would be a grossly mistaken assumption. Such a survey is only a small part of an

established process for a successful rural exception and even here, there are clear guidelines which the developer chose to ignore:

§ The housing survey arrived through letterboxes without pre-warning or consultation. It was not “fair, open and transparent” and neither was it as “independent” as it should have been with its misleading statements simply angering and confusing residents who had only contributed to the NDP process a matter of months before including an assessment of the need for affordable housing.

§ A number of residents felt it was inappropriate, bordering on intimidating, for the survey to state that it was “endorsed” by Herefordshire Council and that the Council “encouraged” people to respond when neither was true.

§ There was no declaration of the developer’s interest in the field in question and neither was it stated that the survey was being undertaken in relation to a specific site in Monkhide when this fact was known by the developer. These were significant disclosure failings.

§ Subsequent to the survey, no attempt was made to share or make information “publicly available” as should have been the case confirming that, in reality, the entire process was concerned only with secrecy rather than openness in order for a planning application to be submitted without the requisite discussion.

§ The survey results as published in the Housing Needs Analysis Report are in fact of little or no value given that only 17 out of 157 households within the parish responded. Furthermore, even a cursory review of the data illustrates that the conflicts are such that it would be difficult to draw any firm conclusions.

§ A majority of 9 respondents out of the 17 (over 50%) stated that there should be no new housing so, by any formula, it is impossible to deduce that Yarkhill needs the development now proposed. The final conclusion in relation to the types of houses needed is based on only 4 responses and we cannot therefore accept that the survey reflects the wishes of the community or the housing it requires.

§ The consultant itself references the low response rate and we would suggest that in normal circumstances this level would be insufficient to permit an effective analysis and certainly inadequate in underpinning a housing application of this importance and of such an impact on the community.

§ We must draw attention to Paragraph 1.3 of the Report which states that a rural exception could be made if land became available and subject to local support. This is either intended to mislead or suggests that the developer may not have disclosed its ownership of the site in question to the consultant beforehand but, in any event, there is absolutely no local support for this development.

§ Paragraph 4.5 indicates that the information gleaned from the survey is intended to provide planners and parish councils with information to determine housing needs and makes no mention of delivering information solely to a developer for the purposes of submitting an unsolicited planning application for land it already owns.

We do not therefore believe that the developer has in any way satisfied the requirements or proven its case for a rural exception and, in our opinion, the Housing Needs Analysis Report should be ascribed a minimal to zero weighting in the planning decision making process. This is further substantiated by the County's Core Strategy.

Herefordshire Council's Core Strategy Policy H2

Policy H2 specifically addresses rural exception sites. As already indicated above, the developer cannot adequately demonstrate a proven need for affordable housing and is therefore unable to meet the requirements of Condition 1.

We would contest that the application is also deficient in satisfying any of the tests of Condition 3. The development will not, in any way, respect the characteristics of its surroundings which are essentially fields, a rural bridleway and the 19th century Herefordshire and Gloucester Canal. The design is totally incompatible with the current form of Monkhide which largely comprises well spaced properties with good size front and rear gardens and set well within their plots. Suggesting a linear layout might have worked in isolation, but not when added to the row of existing properties along this stretch of bridleway which will result in an extended straight line of 16 dwellings. Such a layout bears no resemblance to any other part of Monkhide or the entirety of Yarkhill and the proposal demonstrates that little consideration has been given to the resultant visual impact or its effect on the surrounding landscape - it would be an eyesore more redolent of a street design that fell out of fashion many years ago and totally at odds with a small Herefordshire hamlet.

Above all however, Monkhide itself has absolutely no facilities and access to the types of services and facilities that residents would need are far from easily accessible most often involving a lengthy car journey. This Condition also cross refers to Policy RA2 which indicates that a development should have the ability to bolster existing service provision and improve facilities and infrastructure. In the case of this development, it will be absolutely impossible to achieve the intended objective given the severe limitations of the location. In fact, the development would simply be a drain on Monkhide's fragile infrastructure and its limited resources which is a key reason why affordable houses under a rural exception are normally situated on the outskirts of a settlement which is clearly not the case in this instance.

A caveat to Policy H2 is that a financial appraisal of a mixed development involving affordable and market housing must be submitted, but we could not see this within the application documentation. Such an analysis is essential in order to demonstrate viability and we certainly have reservations as to whether the economics of the development will work on a ratio of 4 affordable to 4 market houses. A question of particular relevance is the void period assumptions that have been made for the affordable element since we would be surprised if there are 4 local individuals in the community who are in a position to move in straight away. Indeed, the pool of locals seeking such housing in a village the size of Yarkhill is, by definition, small.

Forgive our scepticism, but if the developer was genuinely motivated to provide affordable housing for the benefit of the local community, it would have made this the subject of its initial application in 2017 / 18. As a result, we have a very real concern that it could build the market housing and then walk away from the social element. We therefore believe that there must be some protection built in if approval was to be granted and would suggest that this

should explicitly state that completion and occupation of the affordable homes must occur before construction of the market houses is started.

NPPF supports full weighting of NDP

The developer's consultants contend that the provision of a rural exception as outlined in Policy H2 of the Core Strategy should take precedence over Yarkhill's NDP especially as regards Settlement Boundary, but we would draw attention to Paragraph 14 of the NPPF which is clear and explicit. We have inserted the relevant information at the end of each condition.

14. In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided all of the following apply⁸:

1. a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan two years or less before the date on which the decision is made; Yes – the Yarkhill NDP was made on 25th September 2018
2. b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement; Yes – Yarkhill has both policies and site allocations
3. c) the local planning authority has at least a three year supply of deliverable housing sites (against its five year housing supply requirement, including the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 73); and; Yes – as of April 2019 it had an identifiable housing land supply of 4.05 years
4. d) the local planning authority's housing delivery was at least 45% of that required⁹ over the previous three years. Yes – over the 3 year period to April 2018, representing the latest published figures, the County stood at 74%.

As can be seen, all the relevant conditions have been satisfied. The planning application is in significant breach of the NDP and of such detriment to Monkhide that it is difficult to identify any benefits that could possibly be said to override the NDP or its policies. It is evident and incontestable therefore that the Yarkhill NDP must be given full material weighting and take precedence in determining this application.

Yarkhill's NDP and its Policies

The application is contrary to NDP Policies Y1, Y2, Y7, Y8 and Y9 while also failing to meet the vision for the future of Yarkhill.

We should state at the outset that the Parish Council and community both support affordable housing as is evidenced in Policy Y2 Paragraph 10 of the NDP, but this must be in accordance with all other policies including the location of the development within a defined Settlement Boundary. This was one of many outputs from the NDP consultation process reflecting a limited immediate need for affordable homes in the locality and a wish to see the rural nature of Yarkhill preserved through small and appropriately situated sites.

The stated vision for the Parish as per Paragraph 4.1 is well defined, but the developer pays it no heed since the application neither respects nor enhances the rural character of Yarkhill and certainly falls short of integrating with the existing built form and wider landscape of the locality. It would also do nothing to support either the improvement in facilities or job opportunities with residents having no choice but to work outside the immediate area.

To understand the full extent and impact of the conflicts between the proposed development and the NDP each specific Policy and their related Conditions are assessed as follows:

Policy Y1 – Site Allocations for New Housing

This site was not an identified or allocated site under the NDP. It is worth noting that a field to the immediate East of the ex-council houses also on the bridleway was deemed to be unsuitable for development following the Call for Sites exercise given its location and conflicts with NDP policies. It was subsequently withdrawn.

Policy Y2 – Housing Development within the Monkhide Settlement Boundary

The proposed site is in contravention of Policy Y2 and as shown in Map 9 being situated outside the defined Monkhide Settlement Boundary. This boundary was specifically established to ensure that any development would take place on small infill sites to reflect not only the existing built form of Monkhide, but also its poor infrastructure including the dangerous Monkhide Village Road (U66203) and the bridleway on which the site sits. We should mention that the Monkhide Settlement Boundary fully conforms with Herefordshire Council's Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note 20 as is stated in Paragraph 6.17 of the NDP. It should also be noted that Monkhide is designated a secondary settlement with primary development focused on Newtown.

Policy Y2 further covers the specific nature and sensitivity of any housing and the relation to its immediate environment. In this respect, the application conflicts with Conditions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

Conditions 1 & 2. The number of houses proposed represents significant overdevelopment of both the site itself and of Monkhide where it will increase the number of dwellings by 65% and this would have severe implications for the existing infrastructure and preservation of the attractive rural environment. The houses themselves are visually unappealing and, while they might resemble each other, they conflict with other properties in Monkhide and are far more suited to an edge of town environment as opposed to a rural village setting. Indeed, this is no better demonstrated than through the photographs in the developer's own Design and Access Statement under 1.6. While some may question the attractiveness of the ex-council houses, they are well set out and have at least assumed a level of individuality that is sadly lacking in the proposed development which simply comprises a group of 8 tightly fitted homogenous boxes. This can also be seen

from the same set of photographs. A proposal to erect feather edge fencing to the rear of the dwellings is out of keeping with the area and will spoil the open outlook from the bridleway that runs down to Watery Lane. None of the ex-council houses, which the developer seems keen to emulate, are enclosed in this fashion.

Condition 3. The development fails to be sensitive to its immediate surroundings not only blighting the views from the bridleway in front of the site towards the hills to the South, but also ruining the openness of this section of Monkhide which borders the historic Hereford and Gloucester Canal to the North. This is an identified Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and a Natural England designated Priority Habitat. It is a haven for bats and owls at night and other species of birds, wildfowl and land animals especially during the spring and summer months. The extra traffic, lighting and noise, including that from the heating units which will need to run 24x7 in winter, will all have a detrimental impact on this local heritage asset. We must also reference the developer's Ecology Study which devotes considerable time to the development site itself, but ignores the eco-system that exists within the adjacent canal basin. The two bridges that cross the canal immediately to the west of the site are of historical significance and the skew bridge enjoys listed status. No consideration has been given to the impact on these structures which are enjoyed by locals and constitute an important tourist attraction within the hamlet.

Condition 4. A visit to the site evidences the fact that the extended old, established and attractive hedgerow bordering the development will be largely destroyed as a result of the need to create two new entrance points. In addition, there is insufficient width between the existing trees to allow for the height and breadth required to form the new entrances and maintain safety implying that at least 2 will need to be removed. This would ruin the current row of 9 identical, consecutively spaced and mature trees which are clearly visible in the photographs on page 9.

Condition 6. It is disappointing that there has not been an attempt to incorporate additional renewable energy sources into these properties - see comments under conflict with Policy Y9

Condition 7. Site access and the impact of traffic from the development are major concerns given the site's poor location and the excessive number of houses proposed.

A significant element of the developer's case rests on the Transport Statement, but this is a deeply flawed document comprising inaccuracies, incorrect facts, and highly questionable analysis including comparables that are irrelevant and meaningless. The entire report fails to address the fact that Monkhide is a relatively isolated hamlet only being accessible from the A4103 via a 0.75 mile narrow and single-track road comprising dangerous blind bends and areas of non-existent sighting such as on the approaches to the Skew Bridge. It culminates in a private road and dead end to the east immediately before Monksbury Court via the bridleway on which the proposed development would sit. Given the poor access, unsafe nature of the road and distances involved, cycling and walking are not an option such that residents are wholly reliant on their cars for every day to day requirement and activity. Naturally, this places a particular strain on the Monkhide Village Road which was never designed to accommodate the increasing level of traffic that now exist both from resident and commercial vehicles. The additional and new traffic flow from the development would only exacerbate the problem which is further worsened by the site's position at the farthest extremity from the A4103 junction. Attention should also be drawn to the severity of the bend on the canal bridge to the immediate West of the site given it is often subject to driver misjudgement and near misses. Currently, only 8 properties need to negotiate this piece of road, but the advent of the development would increase that by 100% representing a sizeable escalation in the risk profile of this section.

§ Monkhide has no shop, school, dentist, doctor, pub, community facility or bus service. It is 1.8 miles to the Spa shop at Newtown which is realistically only accessible by car via the A4103 such that the

development would completely lack connectivity. Reaching the shop from the east of the development is impossible be it by car, bike or on foot as it comprises a bridleway for a short distance before becoming a footpath over what are ploughed fields and then the A417 which lacks a pavement. The only other bridleway from the U66203 is identically restricted and no existing resident of Monkhide would consider either as an alternative to a car especially as you would still have to cross both carriageways of the A4103 where there are no pedestrian traffic lights. We should reference the Highways Departments' comments on planning application 180870 where one reason for recommending refusal was the lack of connectivity to Newtown and yet this distance was only 0.2 miles compared to 1.8 miles in the case of this application in Monkhide (1.1 miles is directly on the A4103). The situation in both instances is identical requiring people to walk along the main carriageway of a major A road which represents a considerable danger.

§ Newtown does not provide a regular bus service as purported with this only being available at Tarrington which is outside walking distance. The 469 to Hereford does stop at Newtown Cross but only at 9.34am on a weekday morning outside school term times which is hopeless for residents needing to depend on public transport for work and leisure activities.

§ Children are reliant on their parent's taking them to school or to a school bus stop by car reflecting the distance from these amenities and the lack of safety on the Monkhide Village Road. Children do not and cannot walk to the bus stop in Newtown for the same reasons combined with the fact that there are no useful services available so we are baffled by the claim otherwise in the Transport Statement. A few teenage children do walk to catch one particular private school bus at the junction of the Monkhide Village Road and A4103, but they are an exception. This route becomes even more dangerous on winter mornings and evenings given the absence of street lighting which is also the case along the A4103 to Newtown.

§ The comparable locations and roads used in the transport statement bear absolutely no relation to the nature of Monkhide or its single-track, dead end road which is not only the sole means of access for residents, but also the route on which the large farm at Showle Court is wholly reliant for access to and from its surrounding fields. This business generates a high level of daily traffic involving large vehicles. The consultants quote the fact that the TRICS database suggests this route can accommodate 100 vehicles per hour, but our analysis could find no such claim and a short visit to Monkhide clearly shows that such activity would result in gridlock. The Highways Department previously required a traffic analysis to be undertaken on the road, but the results of this were criticised by residents and the PC and yet the same numbers are being used to support this new application. It was carried out on a wet day in March, did not begin until 8am followed by a 2 hour break for lunch and then finished at 4pm. The actual morning traffic peak in Monkhide begins closer to 7.30am and farm traffic even earlier. The evening peak is after 5pm and closer to 6pm and this must therefore cast doubt on the usefulness of the data. Furthermore, both planning applications for this site have been submitted in the last quarter of the year when farm activity drops off and so movements of tractors, cattle trucks, combine harvesters, fertiliser tankers, mowing machines and lorries would not be adequately captured by the survey.

§ In July and August this year the PC received numerous complaints concerning the traffic on the Monkhide Village Road and especially the high level of unsafe driving which caused a number of near misses and particular dangers to children on school holidays and horse riders from the local stables. This reached a level where the PC was compelled to launch a safe driving campaign in September - see front page of the Yarkhill Newsletter on the Parish website. We had already consulted Balfour Beatty about this ongoing challenge.

§ The figures used to illustrate the likely number of car movements to and from the development site again rely on data for areas that have absolutely no similarity to Monkhide especially as walking and cycling are not realistic alternatives. Over 90% of current Monkhide residents run two or more cars

and our own analysis based on resident movements reveals that an average family of two parents with one working full time and the other part time with one child results in 8 to 10 car movements per house per day. Conservatively applying this to 5 of the proposed 8 houses indicates 40 to 50 additional movements to and from the site will be made per day in the week. Assuming the remaining 3 affordable homes are occupied by retired couples or couples without school age children, the expected number of trips would be 4 to 6 per house per day or 12 to 18 in total indicating that the development would create 52 to 68 trips per day which has substantial implications for the narrow access road and, put simply, it will not be able cope especially at peak times. It is worth bearing in mind also that our trip analysis does not include traffic generated to and from the site by delivery vehicles, family or friends visiting or general workmen. The figures quoted in the Transport Statement are therefore woefully understated. The Planning Department will be aware of recent planning application 191217 for Monksbury Court Barns where it was vital to prevent vehicles using the Monkhide Village Road to access the A4103 in order to maintain the free flow of traffic on this route. The proposed development would generate traffic of a higher level than Monksbury Court Barns which is a material concern.

§ The developer is proposing to formalise 3 passing places and add a fourth, but this will be of no benefit whatsoever. The 3 existing places are informal and serve their purpose with the benefit that they do slow down speeding drivers given their rougher nature while residents' driveways also constitute numerous other informal passing places which they are content to allow. Furthermore, it would be impossible to widen the road at the suggested locations given the proximity of verges and hedgerows while neither has thought been given to ownership of the land in question. The suggested new passing place in the indicated location is also questionable given it is on an open piece of the road and close to areas where drivers are already able to pass. The real and fundamental issue affecting the entirety of the road is not the inadequacy of passing places, but its very nature with blind bends and areas where sighting is almost non-existent. The only answer to this is to manage traffic at an acceptable level which will not be possible if these 8 houses are built.

§ The site sits on a bridleway and Herefordshire Council is not obliged to maintain its condition to the standard of an adopted road. With its daily use by 8 additional houses, it is evident that there would be consequential wear and tear, maintenance and safety implications probably within a relatively short period and we doubt that this or any other bridleway was ever intended to support such intensive vehicular use. Existing residents have also raised the matter of the legal right of access over the bridleway though we note from the application that the owner / developer has demonstrated its access rights to Planning. We must rely on

Planning's confirmation therefore that this right exists and that it extends to any company undertaking construction and the subsequent occupiers of the properties in question.

§ Condition 8. Any development is expected to provide adequate off street parking but, in this instance, consideration has not been given to the limited amount of space available on site as a result of the houses being tightly fitted in side by side combined with the fact that a majority of residents are likely to own 2 vehicles given the poor accessibility of the location. While we acknowledge that the number of resident spaces provided meets guidelines, the issue is that no provision has been made for any additional vehicles visiting the site. There is insufficient room on the development without obstructing occupants and absolutely no additional parking is available within a significant distance. It is also self-evident that the constraints of the single-track road are such that there is insufficient width to allow for double parking without it becoming blocked and hindering other residents and users.

§ Condition 9. The NDP is very clear and specific that a development should be small in scale and preferably of up to 3 dwellings on a brownfield site where possible and where it will not be adversely

affected by existing agricultural activities. This development fails each of these conditions. 8 houses are proposed against an acceptable maximum of 6, the site sits in open countryside (RA3) rather than on brownfield land and it would certainly be impacted by farming activities especially given that the immediately adjacent field to the West is used for sheep droving activity often very early in the morning and late into the night in Spring and Summer. This would undoubtedly become an area of future dispute between residents and the farm at Showle Court.

§ Condition 10. This specifies that there is a preference for smaller and family accommodation of properties with 2 to 3 bedrooms whereas the application includes 2 x 1 bedroom homes. In addition, we are confused by the indicated composition of the dwellings. The Housing Needs Survey Report states that there is a demand for a 1 bedroom bungalow and the Planning Statement states that the plans do incorporate a bungalow, but there is no such property on the site plan. The Design & Access Statement refers to 2 apartments but no bungalow. We presume that the intention is that the ground floor of plots 5 and 6 should be viewed as a bungalow even though it fails to meet the definition of this style of housing. In reality, these plots are simply flats and we cannot believe that an elderly couple, who presumably the ground floor flat is intended to accommodate, would wish to live beneath say a young couple perhaps with a baby. The design of the split gardens, in a presumed effort to demonstrate the provision of outside space, is also badly conceived, impractical and most likely a catalyst for neighbour disharmony. These also contradict the comments made elsewhere in the supporting documents that all the properties comprise large rear gardens.

Policy Y7 – Traffic and Transport

Given the location and nature of Monkhide it is impossible for such a development to be the catalyst for developer funded improvements to facilities or infrastructure as much as these would be welcomed. This would require improved public transport, better access to services, substantial road enhancements over and above those proposed and a major upgrade to local footpaths and bridleways. We do not consider any of these to be a realistic.

Policy Y8 – Water Supply and Sewage

The NDP makes specific reference to the small Monkhide sewage treatment works given its fragility and we note that the developer is relying on a Welsh Water (WW) letter dated 4/5/17 even though WW limits the validity of any such planning related advice to a maximum of 12 months. The developer will not therefore be aware of the major breakdown of the unit during this Summer which took 10 days to repair. In this period, the PC was asked by WW to meet with two of its senior engineers on site where it was explained that a major constraint to the plant's efficient operation is the limited capacity of the long and narrow outflow pipe into the river Lodon which renders it susceptible to blockages. The plant is further restricted by the capacity of the particular unit installed. The Parish Council has had repeated conversations with WW regarding the unpleasant smell emanating from the plant along the bridleway in front of the ex-council houses as well as at the outflow point into the river. This has been under review by the company and specialist monitoring equipment was installed in the Spring. As it currently stands, the treatment works may well not have the capability to service 8 additional houses without the necessary upgrade expenditure.

The proposed development would be discharging into the River Lodon which sits within the River Lugg catchment. While this would be effected via the Monkhide sewage works, we understand the developer will still need to satisfy the new HRA requirement announced by Herefordshire Council on 15th October this year.

As regards water supply, the development will be reliant on the connection to the mains in Watery Lane that predominantly feeds properties in the area surrounding Yarkhill Church. Topographically, this mains pipe sits at a level below Monkhide which thus requires water to be fed uphill through what is a narrow conduit. The

result of this, and one experienced by the limited number of connected properties in Monkhide (most are reliant on private supplies via well or borehole), is that pressure is susceptible to fluctuation and can drop especially during the summer. This situation may well deteriorate further given that the development at Monksbury Court barns will also be reliant on the same supply which was never intended for anything other than a small community.

Policy Y9 – Reducing Flood Risk and Supporting Sustainability

A particular issue at this location is the substantial run off that occurs from the fields to the South. Existing residents along the bridleway can often find their rear gardens flooded in periods of heavy and prolonged rain and it is not apparent that this has been fully considered. We have received the photographs below looking towards the North East and North West of the development site which demonstrate the extent of the problem after the recent period of rain.

A particular requirement of Policy Y9 is that a development should seek to be energy efficient and incorporate principles of sustainable design, but none of these are evident in this application apart from the mention of heating being air sourced. However, this can be far from cost effective unless standards of insulation are high and nowhere in the supporting documents is reference made to the level proposed. Furthermore, this method of heating is also less efficient unless it is underfloor, but again this is not addressed. In fact, we remain to be convinced that the matter of hot water and heating provision has been sufficiently thought through which is best evidenced by the fact that air source heating is known to be unsuitable for a flat above ground level so is simply not an option for the upper floor of plots 5 & 6.

It is also disappointing that no effort to explore other eco-friendly opportunities has been considered including rain water regeneration, which would reduce the burden on the mains water supply, or the use of solar energy given the south facing position of the properties to the rear which could further reduce living costs and offer environmental benefits.

Policy Y11 – Protecting Landscape Character

This policy, which links to Policy Y2, exists to ensure the retention of mature hedgerow and trees, to avoid light pollution for the protection of wildlife and other residents and to protect and enhance the landscape and character of Yarkhill. The proposed development fails each of these tests. We are especially concerned by the destruction of the mature hedgerow fronting the site and the row of trees immediately behind. The use of sensor lighting is intended to demonstrate that properties will have adequate security, but totally ignores the detrimental impact to local wildlife and the need to maintain dark skies. It will also have a harmful impact on

those who enjoy this area given the increased levels of noise, odour and light pollution that 8 additional properties are guaranteed to produce.

Reasons for refusal of previous application 174555 remain unaddressed

This latest application continues to perpetuate the same major faults and failings as the original and therefore the reasons why it was refused have not been adequately overcome. It still contravenes Core Strategy (CS) Policy RA2 and NDP policy Y2. Given the doubtful case for a Rural Exception, it remains contrary to the full requirements of CS Policy H3 and does not meet the demands of CS Policies LD1 and LD2 in relation to the impact on biodiversity.

The developer continues to be unable to prove that the proposed development responds positively to the surrounding area and the layout and nature of the properties still propagate a suburban appearance which does not respect its rural setting thereby being contrary to CS Policy LD1 and NDP Policy Y3. The poor overall design and appearance of the scheme further conflicts with the relevant policies in the NPPF.

As a result, the overall planning balance is such that the adverse effects of the scheme continue to demonstrably outweigh the benefits and it is therefore difficult to see how approval could be justified. Indeed, the conflicts with the NDP and Core Strategy are substantial while, at the same time, Yarkhill continues to deliver more than sufficient housing growth to meet its obligations such that this development is unnecessary. There are currently planning applications submitted or pending (excluding this particular application 193382 and recently refused application 192712) for 15 dwellings against a remaining commitment of 3 over the NDP plan period.

Conclusion

The high turnout level for the vote on the NDP and its resultant overwhelming endorsement by the community was evidence of the universal support it received. Everyone, including the PC and NDP committees, contributed for over 2 years in the rightful belief that this document would be the driver and determinant of housing policy across Yarkhill supported by the Core Strategy and NPPF. It is not surprising therefore that residents now find it difficult to understand how a developer could simply overturn it by claiming a rural exception against its

wishes and the policies they helped to shape. Indeed, if this application was to be approved, we have a fear that it would be almost impossible to re-engage with local people in a future review of the NDP as it is unlikely anyone would perceive the point of doing so.

In terms of the application itself, there is an inherent contradiction in the developer's scheme. It proposes to build affordable houses, but in an unsustainable location that will place an additional and unnecessary financial burden on residents especially as regards the necessity of car ownership to provide any form of mobility. It is difficult to counter the view therefore that the application is unequivocally flawed. It also raises the fundamental question as to whether the properties in question could ever possibly be described as truly affordable?

The Parish Council and community are resolute in their opposition to the scheme. It is in contravention of every essential planning document and policy and would severely damage Monkhide as a small rural Herefordshire hamlet. No amount of reconfiguration or attempts to demonstrate its acceptability will alter the fact that it represents a poorly conceived and executed proposition. To put it simply and bluntly, this is a housing development in the wrong place.

4. Finance.

Payments made as follows:

Autela Payroll Services	£ 39.23
Parish Clerk	£322.80
Parish Clerk (cones)	£ 12.00