

Cradley Parish Council

Planning application for land above Pixiefield. No. 170241

To differentiate between the two plots of land, the new site is designated Upper Pixiefield (UP), while the already developed site Lower Pixiefield (LP)

On the 14th March, Cradley Parish Council voted, *nem con*, to reject this application. However CPC wishes to make the following points which, it is to be hoped, will be viewed positively by Hereford as well as the developer.

1. The original application was for **'up to 60 houses'**
2. At the Planning Committee meeting in Hereford on 17th Sep 2014 the application was voted thru by 16 Councillors (with 1 against, 2 abstaining), **'subject to the detailed matters coming back to the Committee'**
3. These 'detailed matters' included density of housing on site, access, number of 'affordables', number of 'open market', etc. During the Planning Committee debate, a number of Councillors showed themselves unhappy with the application 'as is', one remarking that **'40/50 houses'** was a better figure, another pointing out that **'access is terrible'**, whilst a third noted that affordables should be **'affordable to live in, not just to buy'**.
4. The PC feels that little or no attempt by the current developer seems to have been made to address these issues.
5. The PC is concerned that the current developer should follow closely **policy H3** in **Herefordshire's Core Strategy** (passed in 2016). **H3** calls for a suitable **mix** of housing in a development such as this, and that this mix should be as per the current (2013) Herefordshire Land Housing Market Assessment (HLHMA). The figures speak for themselves:
6. For a development of this size, the open market mix should be:
4.3% as 1-bed units (2 houses) – this application 0%
30.5% as 2-bed units (12) – 0%
55.2% as 3-bed units (21) – 69% (27 houses)
10% as 4-bed units (4) – 31% (12)

The affordable housing mix:

27.8 as 1-bed units (6) – this application 19%
38.3% as 2-bed units (8) – 43%
30% as 3-bed units (6) – 38%
4% as 4-bed units (1) – 0%

The only conclusion that can be arrived at is that if the development had followed the Core Strategy with HLHMA input, the **number of bedrooms would have been 150** – instead of the **177** currently shown. That is, **27 less bedrooms**, and thus, accordingly, a more reasonable number, and mix, of houses.

7. This is quite important to the look, and density, of the houses that Cradley Parish Council would like to see in what, it feels, could still turn out to be an exciting and imaginative development.
8. It must be emphasized at this point that Cradley Parish Council is not a 'house- or estate-blocking' PC. It has been known since the 1960s, when LP was originally built, that the field above would be used for more housing at some stage, and this has always been accepted by the Parish Council. It should however be pointed out that the 2009 SHLAA assessed UP as having space for **30 houses**. It also, incidentally, assessed the land opposite St Katherine's as having space for 12 new houses, but in fact the developer himself dropped the figure to 7. Ironically UP has shot up to double its SHLAA assessment.
9. CPC has been told by the Senior Planning Officer that all we should look at is 'Siting / Lay-out...Appearance / Design; and Landscaping'
10. **Based on the evidence of the original Minutes of the 17th September 2014**, that 'determination' on the 'reserved matters' (esp. density) must now be carried out and Cradley Parish Council will do its utmost to view the developer's ideas and plans in as constructive a way as possible, bearing in mind the status of the Cradley and Storridge 'village-type' in the local landscape.
11. Cradley Parish Council met to discuss these matters at our March meeting (Tuesday 14th). There were a number of concerned parishioners from LP present, and a lengthy open discussion was allowed by the Chair.
12. From this discussion a number of valid and thoughtful points emerged.
13. **IMPACT on Pixiefield (LP)**. No attempt seems to have been made to deal with this major point, especially as regards access to and from the construction site.
14. Building on this site will take at least 2 years, possibly more. Especially in the first few months, and whenever a new burst of construction is started, heavy construction traffic (lorries, heavy-duty wagons, etc.) is expected to drive thru LP at all hours, negotiating the very narrow 'streets' and **five 90-degree corners** to and thru this chosen access. The impact on the residents as well as the road surfaces will be very high and extremely negative.
15. LP residents have been told that during the period of construction, no private vehicles should be street-parked. **This must not be implemented**. LP is its residents' terrain, not the developer's.
16. No attempt has been made to safeguard the infrastructure of LP – the 'streets' in particular, over the first two years, will take a massive, and hugely negative, pounding. It will also undoubtedly be the case that some of the LP gardens will receive all kinds of collateral damage. With the best will in the world, at some stage parts of street-facing gardens will inevitably be damaged, and the PC request that **within any contract roads and pavements will be made good and all damage to gardens and frontages be mended**. It is up to the developer to ensure that LP is relatively unscathed. This, the Parish Council feels, should go without saying.
17. No attempt has been made to safeguard the infrastructure of that part of Cradley as a whole. Heavy construction traffic will come in from Ledbury on the Bosbury road,

from Worcester and Hereford along the A4103 and then thru the village. This will heavily impact domestic vehicles, especially during going-to-work and coming-from-work time for the residents, as well as school runs twice a day.

18. Within the site itself no attempt has been made to **integrate a total mix of houses**. The central 'street' in particular could become a 'slum' of cheaper residences with no front gardens, set aside and out of sight of the 'wealthier' residences, akin to a city or town design and highly antipathetical to a classic English village in a rural environment.
19. No thought seems to have been given to the **density of traffic within and without UP**. 60 houses equals possibly as many as 100 cars (of all sizes: small, people-carrier, 4X4). Add on teenager vehicles: possibly at least another 50 cars. Most of these will be fighting to get out of and into UP, as well as clogging LP roads at least twice a day (plus school runs twice a day).
20. **Bungalows**. No attempt has been made to take in the number of elderly residents who would certainly wish to live in such a development. The Parish Council believes that bungalows must be threaded into the plan, and suggests that these should be built on the eastern side of the site. If this plan goes ahead 'as is' certain houses in Credenleigh, Fairlea Close and Chockbury Lane will also be **unduly overlooked** by the larger, and most expensive, houses.
21. **Even at this late stage, Cradley Parish Council (with much input from concerned parishioners) would like to put forward the following suggestions, all of which would surely alleviate the many worrying problems thrown up by this application, as well as possibly transform the site into an innovative and imaginative development which would not only accord with Cradley's Neighbourhood Development Plan, but with the wishes of the community at large.**

21 (a) **Access**. We believe that construction-site delivery vehicles as well as workers' cars should, as a possible temporary measure, gain access **via the gate situate in the top north-west corner of the field**. A clear run down Chockbury Lane from the A4103 Worcester/Hereford road makes this a prime access point, taking all site vehicles out of the village entirely. **NB** Initially this access is a temporary measure, to be utilised solely during full construction on the site. **However – see 21 (b) below.**

21 (b) We now suggest two access points **into** UP, instead of the one already designated which, otherwise, will become a bottleneck during the busiest times of the day.

One new access point could be from Lower Chockbury Lane, just above (ie north of) the last house in LP on the lane side. This would require almost a capital project in itself, since there would have to be a wide splay for the entrance, and the bank on the opposite side of the lane would have to be pushed back to take in two-way traffic from the normal entrance to LP up to and slightly beyond the new point of access. It has been suggested that a mini-roundabout be constructed at this point, which would mean that the opposite bank would be pushed back even further, and the ancient hedgerow grubbed up and transplanted. Certainly all of this could be achieved, altho the cost

would be high (the construction itself; permissions from the landowner opposite to UP/LP; and so on).

Alternatively, the temporary access in 21 (a) could be transformed **into a permanent route**. The benefits of this would be enormous, and not just in the matter of cost. All those vehicles coming from Bosbury/Ledbury, as well as from the rest of Cradley itself, would naturally use the access in LP, with the new access on Chockbury taking traffic from Hereford and Bromyard, as well as some from Worcester. **The entrance splay here would be excellent, capable of taking all kinds of traffic which would not therefore touch the main village at all.**

21 (c) **Sunken lanes**. Most of Chockbury Lane, as well as Lower Chockbury Lane, is a classic Herefordshire 'sunken lane', and as such is an important and significant portion of the local landscape. At all costs it should be safeguarded as much as possible. However, post-construction, the flow of traffic will not be over-heavy if the access within LP is also utilised, and therefore any possible bottleneck effect will be negated.

From the A4103 down to the possible new access gate in the top NW of the site the lane is wider and far more robust with passing gaps in it. Lower Chockbury Lane is a good deal more fragile, esp ecologically, since from the access splay into LP to the top of this one-way lane, less traffic uses it and thus plants are allowed to flourish. Too, this part of the lane is much narrower.

21 (d) The PC would like to see, within the development itself, a 'pepper-pot' effect (utilised by many forward-thinking developers) as regards housing. The present effect of all the most expensive houses in a half-moon around the outer limits of the site is ugly, but can be mitigated if there is a true mix of houses all together throughout the estate. This will stop any 'slum' effects of all the cheaper houses in one block. **This would also mirror contemporary Cradley as it is today, with old Victorian houses, for instance, opposite new eco-houses, and so on.**

21 (e) The PC, together with LP residents, are very concerned that, while mentioned in the original Planning Committee's report – **par 4.9** – a proposed bund 'in the south of the site' seems to have disappeared from the new application. Originally, in '100-year events' (as it were) the flood flows would be directed to the south-west/south --- but this would not be the case, since **the site slopes south-east**, which is where most of the flooding still occurs nowadays. This needs to be addressed.

21 (f) The PC also feels that the matter of water-pollution during and post-construction be looked at again. The surface-permiability on-site has clearly been carefully thought out, but there remains a possibility that oil-pollutants could still infiltrate into run-off water.

21 (g) The PC is very concerned about the possibility of light pollution. The new development will be seen from the AONB, across the valley. Street lighting would obviously cause enormous light pollution, and would directly go against part of Cradley Parish Council's Neighbourhood Development Plan (now at Inspector stage)

22 Cradley Parish Council hopes that all of the above is viewed constructively since we feel that this development is an important one for the village, and could be a shining example of a well-integrated estate that takes in Cradley's NDP, and fits in fluently with our historic village.

A two-way dialogue between developer and Parish Council would clearly be beneficial to both parties, as well as the wider village community.

Cradley Parish Council: 24 March 2017