

The following is a comment on application **P230457/F** by **chris stephens**

Nature of feedback: Objecting to the application

Comment: There are many important reasons for the Council to reject the current application. I do not feel the latest responses and feedback provided have in any way addressed the seriousness my concerns personally or as a household. The key objections are summarised below. These comments are provided as a parishioner within Colwall Parish

The site is directly within Colwall Conservation Area (within an AONB), designated as a precious national and county asset for many years. The Council has a statutory responsibility to protect and enhance that asset. The council's Character Assessment and the Colwall LSCA emphasized that the Village's local distinctiveness is at risk. The Council's own Landscape Officer has advised that the proposed development would result in a permanent change in the character of Old Church Road from rural to urban, and a major negative change to the site itself. It is clear that this development will do significant harm to the Conservation Area far beyond the public benefit given all of the points below and that there are better alternatives. Reviewing the current and previous notes on responses from the county, developers and others it is clear that the protected status of the Conservation Area was not properly considered during the NDP process or subsequently and so in this aspect the NDP was misleading and so this should be revisited via a revised NDP and subsequent new vote

Safe road, pedestrian and other road user access to the development cannot be delivered. Old Church Road is a characteristically country lane in Colwalls designated Conservation Area. It is simply not wide enough to support the proposed widening and foot/cycle path access routes given current landowners are not willing to allow access to their land including verges and protected hedgerows etc. The development is the opposite of Herefordshire Council's policy to encourage pedestrian and cycle access. The severely substandard footway proposed by the Applicant could not be constructed within the existing width of the adopted highway. It is significant that the Applicant has not responded on this issue.

There are much better options available within the village which are not in a Conservation Area which is massively supported by over 90% of Parishioners who recently voted to reject the Grovesend development. Much is rightly made of the importance of Localism in determining local planning and the vote confirms that the choice of sites and site prioritisation included in the NDP was not put to a democratic process. This has been confirmed as a significant error. For example - the site at Mill Lane was selected for housing development in Herefordshire Council's 2012 housing review and in the Parish Council's 2013 LASCA study. Both rejected the site at Grovesend as being unsuitable. The Mill Lane site has good pedestrian and vehicular access, is next to the new primary school, village hall, scout hut and close to the cricket ground and local bus services. And it is not in Colwall's Conservation Area. Mill Lane continued to be the preferred option in the 2015 iteration of the draft NDP, but was replaced in the 2018 version by Grovesend. I have tried and failed to identify a credible explanation for this volte face, and the Parish Council has refused to supply information that might have been helpful. The current explanation is that the decision was predicated by the grading system within the revised LASCA and the Parish Council would be unable to offer an alternative, although that would be contrary to established case law and advice from Herefordshire Council's Planning Officers, the Government, the author of the LSCA report and the Parish Council's own planning consultants.

It would reflect public opinion and Localism requirements of the process. The choice of Mill Lane was supported by consultation responses in 2013, 2015 (83%:17%), 2018 (88%:15%) and 2020 (97%:3%). In 2023 a formal Parish Meeting was called to discuss the proposals for development at Grovesend. At the request of that meeting, Herefordshire Council conducted a formal poll of electors in the village. All voting had to be in person within a five hour window on one evening, but a remarkable 503 electors (25.01%) turned out to vote. 92% voted against proposed development at Grovesend.

The application does not meet the minimum standards set out in the NDP relating to protection of the

Conservation Area, pedestrian access and preservation of ecology.

The application is still short of essential details including S.106 and S. 278 agreements, realistic plans for highway works to Old Church Road and arrangements for the maintenance of amenity space within the development.

Rejection would be consistent with the latest Government policy. The development would damage the character of the Conservation Area, and alternatives are available.

Rejection would give us an opportunity to work constructively with the current Parish Council and Herefordshire Planning Officers to develop a revised NDP that better reflects both the need for new housing and opinion within the Village.

The development would cause serious harm to the local natural habitats and wildlife within a protected Conservation Area within an AONB. The Applicant has provide an inadequate ecological report and small update, but has not responded at all to issues raised relating to ecology. It still has not even offered to provide vital protection for the existing wildlife corridor used by Great Crested Newts, [REDACTED] and others. It still has not offered a plan for the crucial maintenance of the proposed wildflower meadow, community orchard and play area. The isolated nature of the development means that for practical purposes these facilities would in any event be of little or no benefit to residents outside the development. Colwall Parish Council has, understandably refused to take over responsibility for it.

As flagged by Severn Trent and many local residents who live with current problems - the development would worsen the serious overload of the existing sewerage system. This already results in elevated phosphate levels and routine and extensive discharges of raw sewage (over 180 "dumps" lasting for 1900+ hours in 2022), turning the Cradley Brook into an open sewer. Severn Trent's initial conclusion was that modelling exercises indicated that the additional foul sewage emanating from 36 new homes would as to current issues. ST indicated that it had commissioned a more in-depth modelling exercise due to resident concerns in the area. But later conceded that the report on which the original response had been based actually related to another location and the new report would probably not be available for two or three months. This issue must be addressed before permission can be granted

Attachment:

Their contact details are as follows:

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Infrastructure from section 106 to consider: No alteration or damage to existing roadside verges and hedgerows

Link ID: https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200142/planning_services/planning_application_search/details?id=230457

Form reference: FS-Case-576890978