

Dorstone Parish Council.

Church House,
Dorstone,
Hereford.
HR3 6AW.
clerkdorstonepc@aol.com
(01981) 550652

Mr Peter Yates,
Planning Policy Manager,
County of Herefordshire District Council,
PO Box 4, Plough Lane,
Hereford.
HR4 0XH.

Dear Mr Yates

Shaping our Place 2026. **Follow on Consultation Preferred Options for the Rural Areas (Parish Councils)**

Further to your letters 23rd June 2010 & 28th July 2010 & attendance by two Councillors at the meeting 1st September 2010, I am writing to inform you of Dorstone Parish Council comments on the **Local Development Framework's Preferred Options – Rural Areas.** The comments are in two parts, firstly general comments on the overall approach and secondly the possible application of proposals to Dorstone Parish.

General Comments

There are a number of points the Parish Council would like to make:-

- Since the new Government has abolished the Regional Special Strategy policy, on which the proposed distribution of housing development in the County is based, the Parish Council have some reservations of the value of a planning exercise which produces such a seemingly precise outcome. They understand the challenge facing the Herefordshire Council in paying for new infrastructure in Hereford City and the consequent desire to attract larger scale housing developers to build 8500 homes to help pay for these developments. However the extension of this exercise to rural areas in the form of a plan to have 4500 new homes in the period 2026 has, in their view, limited merit. For example Parish Councillors, at the meeting were surprised to learn that if the 4500 target is hit well before 2026 this could result in new applications being turned down merely on the basis of the target figure of 4500 being achieved. Parish Council would hope that Herefordshire Council have the ability to be flexible if this situation arose.
- However the Parish Council understand and support the idea that certain centres are better placed to have new housing development, the criteria based approach seems a sensible one on which to create a framework for rural areas planning decisions. Parish Council hope however that this is not applied in a rigid fashion, with sympathy for settlements that fall outside the designated area covered by policies RA2 and RA3 and their concerns over their sustainability in the future.
- This strategy also seems to have been conducted in isolation from any employment strategy for the County. Parish Council wonder how realistic these targets are in the absence of significant growth of employment prospects in the County.

Comments on the status of Dorstone as a Hub

Parish Council note there has been a change in the potential status of Dorstone, from being on the “other settlement” list, to, a “Hub” for Peterchurch. Parish Council wish to express their concern on this change for the following reasons;

1. On reading paragraph 2.4, Dorstone does not meet the criteria for “hub” status, other than being within 5km of Peterchurch. Dorstone has a pub and village hall, the Post Office is shut, and there is no village shop or primary school. Other than farming activities and individual self employed business people working from home, there is no employment site as such. Parish Council understand, in a recent email to the clerk, that Dorstone’s Front Room is being regarded as a key service. Whilst it does sell “some Stuff”, to quote one of the e mails, it only sells a very limited range of dry and frozen foodstuffs and cannot be regarded as a substitute for a shop, for example the general stores in Peterchurch. The travelling Post Office also provides a very limited service for 4 hours per week.
2. In the context of Peterchurch providing services to Dorstone, the Parish Council understand that you regard the public transport as good, it would be beneficial if you could provide information, for the Council to understand, on what basis you have formed this view. There is a bus service which travels to and from Hereford, via Peterchurch, but the idea that this could be used as a regular means of accessing services in Peterchurch is impractical, owing to the spasmodic return journey times of this service, resulting in long waits in Peterchurch for the returning bus.
3. The Parish Council would also be interested to learn of the status of these new proposals in relation to Parish Plans. In the Rural Settlement Hierarchy background paper Parish Plans have not been used directly to help determine the Rural Settlement Hierarchy. Given the encouragement and support by Herefordshire Council, to the parish plan process, it is very disappointing to learn that the outcomes have not been given any weight in preparation of the strategic rural settlement planning process. The final version of Dorstone Parish plan is currently subject to Planning Committee approval. The conclusions of Dorstone Plan, in relation to future development of the Village, are broadly in line with the status of Dorstone as being in the “Other settlement” category as defined in existing UDP Planning policies. However the prospect of being a hub with the possibility of having more significant future developments is contrary to the strong consensus within the Parish, reflected in the Parish Plan Questionnaire, that small limited in-fill developments were welcome but larger scale developments were not supported. Parish Council believe this view of future development is also strongly influenced by the scale of development which has already occurred in Dorstone over the past decade or so. In view of the new Government’s approach to “localism” Parish Council would trust that the Parish’s views, obtained by an excellent 85% response to the questionnaire at the beginning of last year, would weigh heavily in your considerations of Dorstone’s future status.
4. One relatively minor point, which could be misleading, is the reference in the Rural Settlement background paper to Dorstone being at risk from flooding to some degree. Recent experience that this is restricted to three small areas, located near to bridges, on the Pont-y-Weston stream, not the Dore River.

Parish Council appreciate the clarification that you have provided on the issue of the distribution of any potential development between Service Centre and Hub. They also understand and support your intentions with regard to consulting Parish Councils on the details of any proposed developments. However the Parish Council believe that they reflect the views of Parishioners in stating that they do not oppose new developments as such, and welcome and recognise the importance of new people to the village. However the Parish Council also strongly feels that any new housing developments must be of a scale and nature that preserves the essential element of Dorstone as a relatively small settlement. It is the Parish Council view that this is better achieved by categorising Dorstone under Policy RA3.

The Parish Plan, including Appendix F on Future Planning Guidance, incorporates this view and would be the basis that we would like you to consider for the LDF Plan.

If you require any clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

I am copying this letter to Councillor P Price.

Yours faithfully

Christopher Hendy

Christopher Hendy

Parish Clerk

September 16th 2010