

WALFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
held at Bishopswood Village Hall 15 April 2009

Present Frank Myers MBE, WPC Chairman. **Speaker :** Ward Councillor John Jarvis.

WPC Councillors S W Cole, M Downey, H Evans, G Jones, G Symonds, M Thomas, B Vine
20 members of the public and the Clerk

Apologies: Cllrs SM Cole, E Drummond, P Heath, L Freeman, A Whitlock

Notes from the meeting

The subject for discussion:

Possible Sites for Affordable Housing within the Parish

The Chairman briefly introduced the subject and then asked Ward Councillor Jarvis to speak.

Ward Councillor Jarvis:

1. The only current area for possible building in the parish under the current Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was Coughton. Sites immediately adjacent to the boundary could be classed as exception sites and planning consent given. An application for nine houses adjacent to the boundary in Coughton in 2008 had been withdrawn as there were objections to new houses' being built under overhead power lines.
2. Affordable Housing was defined as that able to be bought/rented/shared with a housing association by those not able to purchase on the open market. Average wage in Hfd was £20,304. The figure to obtain a 95% mortgage was given as 3.5 x annual salary (single earner) giving £75,000 as maximum price of house that could be considered and 2.9 x annual salary (dual earners) giving £93,000 house price. £98,000 was the maximum price for those moving from one house to a larger one because of changed needs(eg enlarged family)
3. There were currently 5,382 households on the housing waiting list in Herefordshire. These were prioritised on urgency of need such as small children, homeless on streets, with elderly dependants etc. and given ratings of gold, silver, bronze by HomePoint. 0057\est Midland Consultants had estimated that in the West Housing Area of Hfd and Shropshire 19,500 houses were needed in Hfd (some 1000 built or consented to in Edgar St Grid) and 11,249in Salop by 2026. This was more than the government had required.
4. By the use of S106 agreements, it was specified that affordable housing should be offered to local applicants first, and, if not fully taken up, the circle for applicants would be widened. Houses could be restricted for local people in perpetuity.
5. In the Walford Housing Survey in 2006 it was found that there was a need for 8 affordable housing units.

Queries from the floor:

1. Self- build on separate plots? Answer: possible, and help could be given for these.
2. Rented housing with housing association owning part of house? Answer: More capital was needed by the applicant in the first place. There were various methods for financial help.
3. Timber-framed housing would be cheaper than brick to build? Answer: very comfortable and economical to run. Could be encouraged.

4. Average price of house in Herefordshire? Answer: £180,000. But it was noted that this was average and many houses were priced below this.

5. The nine houses in the development at Willow Close behind Fowbridge Gardens were still unsold. Could these houses not be filled first by using compulsory purchase? Answer: this had already been looked into but the price asked for was too high. A higher standard of building was required for affordable houses than those built at this site (better insulation etc) and much work would be needed on these houses to bring them up to standard.

6. Compulsory purchase orders were normally well below the market price in other parts of the country. Answer: Cllr Jarvis would ask that the Willow Close development be looked at again with more rigour.

7. Could not the use of PPS3's extend the boundaries nearer the 'centre' of Walford for new houses? Coughton had become the main housing site within the parish by repeated large developments proposed and consented to by South Herefordshire District Council and Herefordshire Council over the years. Coughton was distant from the facilities of pub, village hall and church.

Answer: at the moment the UDP provides the guide-lines for development. The Local Development Framework (LDF) is being written now to take the place of the UDP in 2012. A more flexible approach to housing development will be hoped for.

8. A number of sites were looked at for housing in Walford Parish recently. Could we be told where these were? Answer: several sites did not fit the description of 'adjacent to boundary' as stated in the UDP. A site near Norrland Place was looked at ; south of Homegarth (dangerous bend and access); the rear of Walford Village Hall; rear of Walford Court near railway line (too far from amenities). The definition of "adjacent" as in 'adjacent to boundaries' is to be re-examined by Forward Planning Officers looking at existing restrictions with new eyes.

The Chairman summarised the feelings of the meeting as follows:

1. That the currently available houses at Willow Close should be occupied first.
2. That individual houses should then be considered on individual plots
3. That eight or more houses on one site was not a suitable answer to the problem in this rural parish.

Ward Councillor Jarvis then gave a brief up-date on the arrangement for rubbish collection with Wheelie Bins to be introduced in the autumn. The bins, for the holding of all re-cyclable materials including glass, would be collected fortnightly. He assured the meeting that the 'black-bag' weekly collections (for other rubbish) would be maintained. More information and leaflets would be available at The Swan and in the next issue of the magazine "Hereford Matters", coming out soon.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm

Chairman

Date