

Ashleworth Parish Council



Dear Sirs/Madam

Ashleworth Parish Council's Response to Tewkesbury Borough Plan Scoping Consultation, Nov 2013

Ashleworth Parish Council (APC) has concluded that a number of issues specifically affecting Ashleworth need to be brought to the attention of the Tewkesbury Borough Planning team.

1. New housing in Ashleworth should follow the current infilling principle (HOU3) and should not be permitted on green fields outside the village envelope:

Although TBC maintain that no 'sites' on which to consult and no strategy for delivering the JCS rural housing figure has been agreed, the latest version of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (Dec 2012) does identify what it considers to be 'suitable' sites for development in Ashleworth. SUB 141 was identified as achievable and suitable and F48, 49 and F55-58 were considered suitable, though unavailable at present. APC was not consulted during the preparation of the initial SHLAA, or during its update. The SHLAA sites identified in Ashleworth had already been reviewed by APC with the TBC Housing Enabling Officer and GRCC as part of a public consultation on Affordable Housing and many were deemed to be unsuitable for any development. APC is keen to preserve the current status of land within the 'landscape protection zone' around Ashleworth and by the same token does not wish to see significant changes made to Ashleworth's settlement boundary. APC wish TBC to take note of the JCS Sustainability Objective 23 which seeks to 'Minimise development on Greenfield land by maximising appropriate use of previously developed land and buildings'.

2. APC are in favour of modest developments which include housing within budget for first time buyers and/or suitable for retired people looking to downsize from other properties in the locality:

An Affordable Housing Needs Survey completed in 2009 identified a need for approximately 6 homes to sustain a local requirement. The Ashleworth Parish Plan adopted in 2005,

contains a number of guiding principles for new housing, including maintenance of the present nature of the village by limiting the number of new buildings which should, in any case, be designed in sympathy and scale with the character of the village. APC are planning to produce a 'Community Design Statement' to build upon the 'Ashleworth Parish Plan'. APC would expect TBC to use this to inform the preparation of its housing development strategy and would push for it to become a supplementary Planning Document and a material consideration in the future.

3. JCS Identifies Ashleworth as one of 15 'Service Villages', to support the development of approximately 800 homes in the rural area by 2031:

Ashleworth Parish Council (APC) is aware of the revised 'Audit of Settlements' within the JCS area, which considers the services within and accessibility at all of the 75 identified settlements. APC wish to highlight the fact that there are many settlements ranked higher than Ashleworth, including some 'Service Villages'. APC would consider this to be an important material consideration when deciding upon development sites and not whether or not a site is or is not available. In other words, the TBC development strategy should not be developer led. Ashleworth would not want to be on the receiving end of a substantial development just because a site was made available and it would help to fulfil the JCS rural development quota. TBC does not have a five year housing land supply, so there is the potential for housing development to be permitted (by an inspector on appeal) in locations where the Borough Council and communities consider it inappropriate. This status makes Ashleworth and other villages like it particularly vulnerable.

The JCS policy SP2 requires rural housing to be allocated in rural service centres and service villages 'proportional to their size and function and accessibility to Cheltenham and Gloucester'. Ashleworth does have good primary services to support its current population, but virtually no secondary services and very limited accessibility to Cheltenham and Gloucester.

On the issue of Sustainability, an important material consideration within the JCS, there are factors to consider in Ashleworth:

Flooding:

Ashleworth is in Flood Zone 3/2a, confirming that parts of the village are highly susceptible to flooding. The TBC Flood and Water Management SPD reiterates the JCS concern by specifying that development should be avoided in areas of high flooding risk. In a similar vein, Ashleworth does not have an adequate drainage infrastructure. Drains are filled to capacity easily and as a result Ashleworth is prone to flash flooding. Any significant development in Ashleworth has the potential to compound the flood risk situation by bricking up fields that would normally retain rain water.

Highways:

One of Ashleworth's key characteristics is that it has no major through traffic. At the moment, the village remains relatively quiet and safe as a result. On the occasions when traffic from the A417 has been diverted through the village, the minor roads have been unable to cope. With inadequate passing places, queues have formed and damage done to verges. Further significant development of the village would place this essentially rural road infrastructure under severe pressure. Any significant developments attracting commuters to a rural, car dependent community such as Ashleworth, do not conform to the NPPF's requirement for sustainable development and should not be approved.

Another point worthy of consideration is the severe congestion on the A.40 resulting in delay and difficulty in accessing Gloucester from the A417 at peak times, particularly at the Over roundabout. Large housing developments north of Gloucester could potentially compound this situation.

Landscape:

Ashleworth is situated in the middle of a Landscape Protection Zone, as designated by the Local Plan 2011. This situation is an important feature of Ashleworth and as such any development in Ashleworth should be infill rather than an extension to the development boundary.

As the result of a Tewkesbury Borough Council Planning Committee decision, Ashleworth is going to receive a large development in the form of a Wedding Venue. This development was not approved by APC nor by many residents. This development will undoubtedly have an adverse impact on the roads and flooding in Ashleworth. As such Ashleworth would not want to sustain a sizeable housing development that would have a significant impact on an already overburdened infrastructure.

APC has welcomed the opportunity to respond to current proposals presented in the JCS and the Tewkesbury Borough Plan Scoping Consultation and this letter provides a response to both of these.

Please would you confirm that these responses have been received. APC invite the TBC Local Plan Scoping Team to come back with any comments.

Yours sincerely,

Adeline Raine

Chairman of and on behalf of

Ashleworth Parish Council