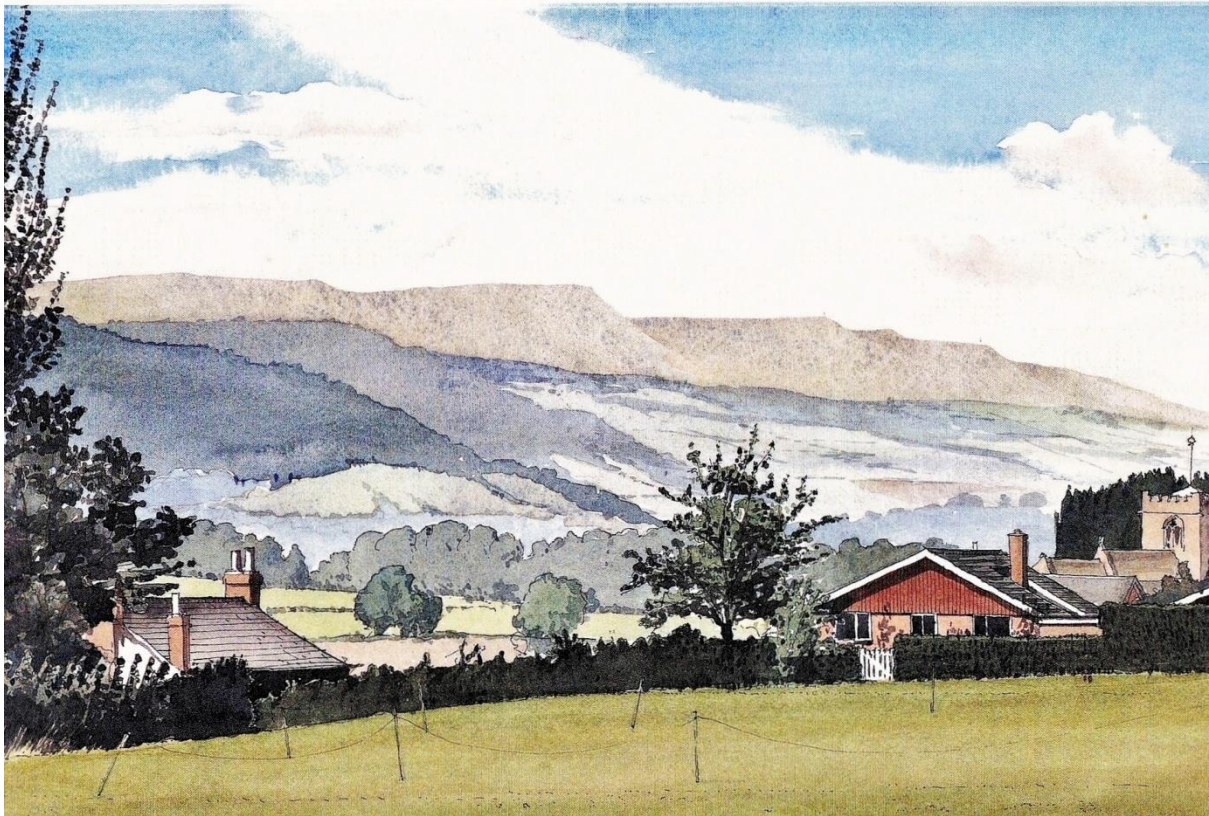


# ALMELEY DRAFT PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

2015-2031

## ALMELEY PARISH – THE FUTURE



VIEW OF AN AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY, ALMELEY.



## Foreword

In 2011, the Government decided that local communities should be closely involved in decisions which affect them, and the Localism Act was placed on the Statute Book. This introduced the concept of Neighbourhood Development Plans, allowing local communities to influence new development in their area.

At a public meeting In September 2012 Almeley Parish Council resolved to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan with the aim of identifying a vision for the parish for the Plan period 2013-2031. Once made, the Plan becomes part of Herefordshire District Council's planning framework which informs and controls the local planning authority's decisions. The Plan will have legal status.

A Steering Group was established, the purpose of which was to design a questionnaire. Residents were fully informed throughout the process and opinions and ideas invited. Once approved by the Parish Council, the questionnaire was circulated to every adult resident of the parish and 167 responses were submitted to the Parish Council. The results of the questionnaire were analysed and during a series of meetings with residents a wide range of issues emerged that will influence the wellbeing of residents and contribute towards the long-term preservation of this rural community. Development of the Plan followed analysis of the questionnaire which was refined by an advisory group, working with the Parish Council. Every effort was made by the Advisory Group to ensure that the Plan reflects the views of the majority of Almeley residents. Key issues included:

- Rejection of large-scale, uncontrolled development;
- Development to be sympathetic to the design and feel of the Parish;
- Identification of possible actions to improve facilities and services for residents.

An electronic copy of the Plan can be found on the parish website: [www.almeley.net](http://www.almeley.net)

Jeff Glyn-Jones

Chairman

Neighbourhood Development Plan Advisory Group and

Vice-chair Almeley Parish Council



## THE 2031 VISION.

In 2031, Almeley Parish will remain an unspoilt, rural and scenic part of Herefordshire, undertaking agriculture and an increase in home working through internet connectivity.

## SECTION ONE INTRODDUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Purpose of the Plan

In April 2012, the Localism Act 2011 amended the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, introducing new rights and powers which allow local communities by preparing a - Neighbourhood Development Plan to influence the design and site for building in their neighbourhood, grant planning permission for certain types of development and get more involved in creating policies. This document is a Neighbourhood Development Plan as defined in the Act.

### 1.2 Submitting Body

This Neighbourhood Development Plan (the Plan) was submitted by Almeley Parish Council, which is qualifying body as defined by the Localism Act 2011.

### 1.3 Neighbourhood Area

The Parish of Almeley is in North Herefordshire, in a rural area bounded by the A411 Eardisley Road, A4112 Kinnersley Road and the A480 Woonton Road.

The Plan applies only to the Parish of Almeley. No other Plan exists for the designated area.

In accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, Herefordshire Council approved on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2012, under Article 7 of the above regulations Almeley Parish as the neighbourhood area within the parish boundary.

#### **1.4 The Context**

Almeley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan must:

- be in conformity with the national planning policy;
- be in conformity with the District Planning Policy: Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy;
- contribute to sustainable development; and
- be compatible with EU regulations and human rights requirements.

#### **1.5 Herefordshire Plan – Core Strategy Document**

Herefordshire Council produced a local plan – Core Strategy, in order to set out a vision, spatial strategy and core policies for development of the County up to 2031. The Core Strategy will form part of Herefordshire’s Local Plan. It aims to balance environmental issues with economic and social needs of communities and ensure that development is sustainable and does not cause harm to residents. Neighbourhood Development Plans must conform to these requirements when plans are considered to ensure that potential adverse effects are identified and will contribute to the aims of the Core Strategy document.

#### **1.6 Plan Period, Monitoring and Review**

The Almeley Plan will run concurrently with Herefordshire District Council’s Core Strategy and apply until 31 March 2031. The Plan will cover a range of issues broader than development and site allocation and will include policy issues relating to social, environmental, economic and employment needs. Although the needs and aspiration of the local community have been understood today, it is acknowledged that changes may occur during the Plan period. There must be awareness of the threat of climate change when home design is presented for discussion so that they are energy efficient. Almeley Parish Council will be responsible for monitoring and revisiting the Plan to ensure its continued relevance to the community.

## **SECTION TWO: Process Summary**

### **2.1 Identification of Issues.**

On 12 September 2012 Almeley Parish Council resolved to develop a Neighbourhood Development Plan. At an extraordinary Parish meeting a working group was set up to assist the Parish Council in developing a questionnaire for distribution to residents. After analysis of the responses to the questionnaire, the Parish Council, working with volunteers, formed an Advisory Group. The Group identified issues that could be addressed by a Neighbourhood Plan.

The following issues were identified:

1. What employment opportunities are there in the Parish?
2. Almeley services and facilities that should be supported and/or expanded;
3. Registered commons and other accessible spaces valued by the community which should be safeguarded;
4. Provision of housing to meet the varying needs of the community;
5. Where new houses might be located outside the village envelope.

There was no specific decision on site allocation. However, four landowners have indicated that they would have no objection to some land being released for development at a future date.

## **2.2 Community Engagement**

To ensure that the Plan reflects the wishes of the community, every opportunity was taken to ensure that residents should be kept informed of progress and invited to express their wishes.

As soon as the Parish Council resolved that a Plan should be prepared, a public meeting was held to recruit volunteers to form a Steering Group to raise awareness of the project and work towards producing a questionnaire for circulation to residents to identify what aspects of life in the village were important to them, and possible improvements considered to be beneficial.

The Steering Group informed the Parish Council of progress towards developing the questionnaire and decisions were made for distribution of the final version. Throughout the process residents were encouraged to contribute to preparation of the questionnaire and development of the Plan. Key to this was use of the parish website, and a parish newsletter, which is read widely. Information was displayed on notice boards, discussion at meetings of the Parish Council – the minutes of which are placed on the website and discussed at public meetings.

The results of the questionnaire were analysed and in June 2014 the results circulated to residents on the parish website, local newsletter, notice boards, etc.

A public meeting attended by the Neighbourhood Planning Officer was held to review the results and contributions invited towards further development of the Plan.





The aims of the Localism Act were described, which include a move towards providing local people with an opportunity to decide the location of new homes and businesses; what should be built and where. NDPs will provide a unique opportunity for local communities to decide future growth and development. The Parish Council has lead responsibility for neighbourhood planning.

Following analysis of the questionnaire, which will form the foundation for a Neighbourhood Development Plan, an Advisory Group was established to discuss preparation of the Plan. Membership was drawn from members of the community and Parish Councillors.

In order to be fully informed of the logistics of producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan, Parish Councillors attended a two-day training session with Herefordshire Council in 2013. A HALC Neighbourhood Plan Training course in September 2013, a three-day 'Planning Camp' in Oxford in April 2014 and discussions with Neighbourhood Planning Officer, Herefordshire Council.

### **2.3 Evidence Base Overview**

A variety of sources were drawn on to inform the Advisory Group working on producing a Plan. (See attached document Appendix 4). These included assessment of changes in the demography of the population. Information was obtained from the Parish Council's Plan for Almeley, produced and approved in 2004. This was based on recommendations contained in the Government's Rural White Paper 2000 which invited local communities to take more control over their own lives and examination of the 2001 Census. The Neighbourhood Development Plan is a logical progression of the outcomes of the Parish Plan. Unlike the NDP, which examines residents' views on development, particularly housing needs; protection of the environment by minimising the impact of new development on the surrounding countryside and opportunities for employment, there was no set format for the Parish Plan. Scrutiny of the 2001 Census revealed that the total population of the parish was 582, living in 251 households. However, the 2011 Census revealed an increase in the number of households in the village and that the population is rather older than the national average. This should not be a matter for concern: Some of these are economically active and many are in good health. Older residents provide a huge amount of unpaid and voluntary work to help run the school, the Parish Council, the village hall, the church and other groups.

There is a general sense of community in the parish. Unemployment and crime levels are low. Deprivation is considered to be low for the majority of the population. Despite this positive view of life in the community, there are challenges where low-cost housing is concerned to meet the needs of young people, wishing to remain in the community. Herefordshire Council Core Strategy Document and the views of expressed residents at public meetings.



St Mary's Church, Almeley

## SECTION THREE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### GOALS

1. To provide opportunities for housing for existing and future residents of the parish, including affordable, private and self-build
2. To maintain the character of the parish and the village and hamlets within it
3. To minimise the impact of new development on Almeley itself and the surrounding hamlets and countryside
4. To minimise the effect of further developments on the countryside, landscape and ecosystems
5. To consider the possible impact of future development on the local infrastructure
6. To reduce possible harm to the environment

The Goals were derived from suggestions made at Open meetings held in February 2013, April 2013, January 2014 and June 2014. Also from the Parish Questionnaire circulated throughout the parish in March 2014.

### Objectives

A set of Objectives was drawn up against each of the Goals.

The objectives enabled the Advisory Group to focus on the challenges and requirements facing members of the community within the parish of Almeley.

In addition they identified the context for key areas of development and possible planning options.

Additionally they were a useful tool in the evaluation of options.

Goal	Objectives
To provide opportunities for housing for existing and future residents of the Parish, including affordable, private and self build housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To provide a limited amount of new housing to meet local needs</li><li>• To provide a mix of housing including housing for older people,</li><li>• To ensure that new development is</li></ul>



	<p>of a high quality design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure that new developments are in keeping with the village and hamlets</li> <li>• To keep new developments smaller than 12 homes (see Mountain View affordable housing) and in keeping</li> <li>• To maintain the local connection criteria</li> </ul>
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Goal	Objectives
To maintain the Character of the Parish and the village and hamlets within it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To protect, conserve and maintain the Parish's Commons and open Spaces (Spearmarsh Common is also used for recreation by all)</li> <li>• To protect and conserve the AONB (South of the village ) and the landscape views</li> <li>• To protect the historic aspect of the village (Conservation area) and hamlets</li> <li>• To maintain the ethos of the Parish being a farming community in a rural area</li> </ul>

3. Goal	Objectives
To minimise the impact of new development on Almeley and the surrounding hamlets and the countryside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support biodiversity</li> <li>• To support the rurality of the parish</li> <li>• To ensure that any future development is sensitively integrated to blend with existing developments within the parish</li> </ul>

4. Goal	Objectives
To minimise the effect of further developments on the countryside, landscape and ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To use land efficiently</li> <li>• To preserve high quality agricultural land</li> <li>• To protect and enhance existing open spaces</li> </ul>

5. Goal	Objectives
To consider the impact of future developments on the local infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To consider the provision of roads and by-ways, drainage and electricity and communication systems,</li> <li>• To consider seasonal effects of farm working (eg harvest), upon road safety and congestion.</li> <li>• To consider the effect upon local services provided by the village school, village hall, church and shop</li> <li>• To position new developments so that current problems with parking, road congestion and road safety are not exacerbated and if possible reduced</li> </ul>

6.Goal	Objectives
To reduce possible harm to the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To consider the effect of increased traffic congestion</li> <li>• To consider the increased effect of pollution from traffic</li> <li>• To consider the damage to verges</li> <li>• To consider the seasonal but short-term effect of water run-off within the Parish</li> <li>• To encourage further use of public bus services and shared transport</li> </ul>



## SECTION 4 DESIGN POLICIES (See also Appendix Three)

### 4.1 Local Distinctiveness

The information given in this document draws heavily on the Almeley Parish Plan, printed in 2004 and analysis of the questionnaire circulated to all residents in 2014.

A small number of houses in the parish reflect the character of rural villages in Herefordshire. However, over the past 30 years approximately 100 properties, mostly architecturally undistinguished bungalows have been built in Almeley Village. They are in sharp contrast to the previous open nature of the village.

It is anticipated that the Plan will provide opportunity to enhance the environment by restricting development in the most densely built up areas in the improve and improve the quality of design, especially within the village. Residents generally seek to conserve local distinctiveness and qualities of a traditional rural settlement.

Planning applications inappropriate to this location and which fail to meet the needs of residents and the conservation of energy are likely to be refused by the Parish Council. The Parish Council will provide guidance for developers and planners to be considered when planning applications are received. Guidance will include maintenance of the rural nature of the parish, resist attempts to urbanisation and changes such as light pollution.

### 4.2 Planning Notice

**The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012**

Herefordshire Council has APPROVED, under Article 7 of the above Regulations the following neighbourhood area:-

Neighbourhood Area Name:  
**Almeley Parish**

Relevant body is:  
**Almeley Parish Council**

The neighbourhood area is identified on the attached map


Map of neighbourhood area

**Almeley parish**


☐ Neighbourhood area and parish boundary

SCALE 1:50,000

NORTH



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## SECTION 5 NDP POLICIES

1 The NDP is centred around Almeley Village itself, but there is scope for limited 1-2 house development outside the village envelope, where groups of houses or adjacent farms provide an existing infrastructure in the form of roads, electricity, water supply etc., which would reduce the pressure on the building density within the existing village envelope and help to prevent encroachment into the sensitive Conservation Area to the west of the village. The scope of this development plan, therefore, covers the whole parish and involves extending the areas around the hamlets of Almeley Wooton and Woonton, as well as giving consideration to more isolated groups such as Upcott, Newhouse, Hopleys Green, The Stocks and Newport House Estate.

## SECTION 6 - ALMELEY PARISH SERVICES AND FACILITIES

Of the approximately 180,000 residents in Herefordshire, about 70,000 live outside the towns. Some by force of circumstances, some by inheritance but most do it by deliberate choice; choosing space and tranquillity in exchange for having to use a car or bus services to reach many services. Mechanisation of agriculture and the mobility produced by railways and cars has changed villages, making them less self-sufficient by reducing service-providers and local craftsmen.

Almeley is a Parish of almost 500 people, living on 1,400 Ha towards the Welsh border with Herefordshire. Half the people live in the central village, the rest are spread across the Parish, which is approximately 3 miles East to West and 2 miles North to South. Almeley Village is not on a main road, so is saved the stress which affects many villages, but A.480 crosses the East end of the Parish in the hamlet of Woonton.

Almeley is classified as a Main Village in the County Unitary Development Plan because it contains more than 100 houses, has a bus service, and has a church, a school, village hall, a pub/shop. A mobile post office visits the village four days a week. These, and the service it lacks, are described below.

### 6.1 The Primary School

This was given to the Vicar and Churchwardens in 1859, and still belongs to them, although it is run by the Education Authority. It has had fluctuating fortunes – people numbers as low as 20 once or twice – but local people have fought successfully for its survival and still support it strongly.

Its official catchment area is most of Almeley Parish and half of Lyonshall (where there is no school), but its present management attracts pupils from a much larger area because of the standard of education and support provided for them.

The original building has been altered and slightly extended and temporary classrooms have been added, but it is still below the space standard required for its members. It uses the nearby Village Hall as overflow for serving lunches and other activities. It was built on part of Spearmarsh Common and uses parts of the Common as a playing field. It has playgrounds on its own site. Its idyllic setting, looking out at the Black Mountains, is part of its attraction.

The wide spread of pupils means a daily arrival and departure of cars for short periods. They park on the road or on a consolidated surface laid between the school and the hall in joint enterprise. Bussing is impractical because of the wide scatter of pupils. Very few are within cycling distance, and the lanes are too dangerous for children.

### **Future Prospects**

The future is difficult to predict. The school is popular and well supported by the Governors and the Parent Teacher Association. There is some doubt by the Education Authority that it can continue at its present level. Almost everyone who has children in the Parish sends them to it, and there is a keen demand for places. Almost everyone who grew up in the Parish went to it, so it is a big fact of their lives. There is an uneasy feeling that its future may be decided by a distant Authority for reasons of its own which are not in sympathy with the needs of the Parish.

## **6.2 The Village Hall, Social Groups and Leisure..**

The Hall was built in 1922 on Spearmarsh Common, as a timber and corrugated iron shed. It has since been refurbished and now contains a main room which can hold 150, a bar, a kitchen, lavatories and a store, all to a decent modern standard. It belongs to Management Committee of Charity Trustees, drawn from the Parish, which pays rent for the site to Herefordshire Council, which owns the Common.

It is well used. The school, meetings of the Parish Council, whist drives, a weekly Craft Club, periodic Sunday lunches, Young Farmers' parties, private wedding receptions and funeral wakes, visiting cinema and live performances, W.I. meetings, summer fetes, jumble sales, yoga classes and all manner of fund raising events by local organisations. It is a Polling Station, and Brownie packs occasionally sleep in it. Thus it is highly important in the life of the Parish and places beyond. Village communities, although they live close together in places like Almeley, may not act in a unified way or have interests in common and need facilities that reflect those interests.

### **Future Prospects**

Because many of the activities use the whole building, it isn't reasonable to introduce fixed uses, such as a shop or a computer centre, which would occupy part of the space permanently. The Committee has ambitions to extend the building, which may be possible,



but it lacks the finance. Previous extensions relied heavily on grant funding and loans, some of which is still being paid off.

### **6.3 Leisure Elsewhere**

Almeley Cricket Club uses the Common as its home ground, and maintains most of its surface. The Club has a pavilion on the other side of the Common and does not use the Hall. Not many of the players come from the Parish, but many older residents are former players.

The Pathfinders walking club is based in Almeley, walking in all sorts of places within about 15 miles, travelling to them by cars.

There are two public houses in the Parish. The Bells in Almeley, which is also the local shop, selling a wide range of groceries, cleaning materials, etc. Newspapers are collected each morning by the owner, but most of the stock has to be fetched from wholesalers. It provides a useful support for residents, especially the housebound. It is a significant source of personal encounters. The other public house is The Ferney, which is in Woonton. It has a small garden and a larger car park. It serves food several days a week. Both pubs perform a useful function for local people who do not participate in the more formal activities in the Village Hall, so their loss would be serious.

### **6.4. Postal Services**

The post office closed some time ago, but a mobile post van serves the village four days a week, providing a wide range of services.

### **6.5 Itinerant Services**

Refuse collection once a week, and re-cycling service every two weeks. Post is delivered once a day, six days a week, and there is a daily collection. Local tradesmen provide a variety of services: gardening, house cleaning, caring for elderly and sick residents. There is no doctor, dentist, care home or optician in the Parish. The nearest doctors' surgery is in Kington, seven miles from Almeley, serviced by an infrequent bus service. .

### **6.6 Broadband and Mobile Telephone Services.**

The need for better broadband and the lack of it was identified by residents who completed the questionnaire. Access to a mobile telephone service is not available in parts of the Parish and the lack of available public telephone boxes presents problems.

Rural businesses and communities continue to face challenges in terms of broadband. Although the Government has released funds aimed at getting super fast broadband to rural areas, this community has not benefited in any way; the gap in connection speeds between

urban and rural communities persists. Residents with rural businesses need access to super fast broadband if the economy is to thrive, small businesses opportunities develop and the community benefit from the cultural opportunities provided by broadband connectivity.

## SECTION 7 TRAFFIC ISSUES

### 7.1 Roads

The roads into the village are all 'c' classification, and only the road between Eardisley and Almeley has the width for 2 cars to pass, being just about 14ft wide over most of its length, wider vehicles, tractors, lorries, and buses, have difficulty using farm gateways or churning up the verges in wet conditions, further weakening the edges of the tarmac road. Due to the minor status of the roads, they are not well maintained, and damaging potholes are a threat to road users, especially cyclists even when roughly patched. The width of the roads and visibility is further reduced by the overgrown verges and hedges during the summer and autumn.

### 7.2 Traffic usage

Most of the traffic is generated by the school run during term time, significant numbers of children being brought in from surrounding areas, and there is also a small amount of through traffic. Otherwise traffic movement is low, but parking for special events and church weddings/funerals, can create problems. The farm traffic is also significant at certain times of the year and collection and delivery of produce and building materials brings in a size of lorry unsuited to the roads. The speed of the traffic is often too fast for the size roads.

### 7.3 Public Transport

Most movements are by car, though there is bus service from the Almeley village five times a day, and an hourly bus service from Woonton on weekdays. These are not well used because of the timings, but some find it invaluable as their only means of transport.

Community Wheels (a community transport service) is available but is not often used.

## SECTION 8 EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

The biggest business in the village is agriculture, much of it being self employed family farms with little or no full time employment, though there is a significant part- time employment and inter-farm contracting and mutual assistance on a seasonal basis. There are other small and part- time home based concerns, "The Bells" shop/pub, "The Ferney" pub, builders, web design, electricians, and others who work outside the parish, but the majority of the population are retired, though many have skills which are put to good use in the community on a voluntary basis. Possibly larger industrial developments in surrounding areas, especially the potential in Eardisley, Lyonshall and Kington, would

make Almeley itself more attractive to younger families in the area, though industrial capacity in Almeley itself is very unlikely for the reasons stated above.

## SECTION 9 COUNTRYSIDE

### 9.1 Rural Aspect

The greater part of the area of the NDP is farmland, with numerous 'commons', one of which is at the heart of the village, and there is a nature reserve on the parish boundary with Eardisley, Holywell Dingle, which is owned by Herefordshire Council. To the west of the village is a conservation area which includes a deep tree-lined 'dingle' known as 'The Batch', and the aspect of the area is on a gentle rise facing south towards the black mountains and Wye Valley, with a view of an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

### 9.2 Countryside and Environment

The site of Almeley Village away from the main roads gives it a sense of isolation. A big proportion of the agricultural land is owned by the County Council and divided into smallholdings, so there are lots of small farms which give a greater emphasis to the agricultural origins of the place. Most residents appreciate the tranquillity of the environment and it is valued as a place for retirement .

### 9.3 The History of Almeley

"Elmelie" is quoted in the doomsday book and had been an established settlement many years before that, though most of the history of that period is lost.

The Mote and Bailey Castle, by the Church and Oldcastle Mound in the The Batch (the "twts" are evidence of defensive earthworks from early times. The Welsh and Anglo Saxon tribes would have been vied over the territory on various occasions, as evidenced by Offas Dyke, the line of which touches the parish in the north.

The Church, is C12<sup>th</sup> to C13<sup>th</sup> with later extensions and modifications, and was preceded by an ancient preaching cross, the remains of which are still in the graveyard at the South East corner of the church. It is an important Grade 1 listed building and is featured in Pevsner.

Almeley Manor is a half timbered house, once used as a court by the circuit judge and is an impressive example of notable period architecture, with a fine garden and ancient trees.

Newport House, and the estate which was the home of past 'Lords of the Manor', covered much of the parish, was taken over by the Herefordshire CC after WW1, the house being used

as a sanatorium until being taken over by displaced Latvian refugees after WW2. It has since been largely restored to its former glory by the present private owners.

Sir John Oldcastle, one of the the Lollards, and possibly immortalised by Shakespeare as “Falstaff”, is thought to have lived in Oldcastle in The Batch

The Quaker Meeting House, an adapted cottage, was given to the Society of Friends in 1672 and is connected to the establishment of Pennsylvania in the USA.

## SECTION 10 HOUSING POLICIES

### 10.1 Background

The houses in the parish cover a wide range of age and style with a significant number of half timbered cottages and buildings dating from before 1700 AD and a number of stone and brick built properties dating before 1950. Since then there has been a flurry of modern house building, much of which has been inappropriate to the architecture and style of previous constructions.

### 10.2 Housing Strategy

The planning policy in recent decades has been to build within the strict village boundary which has created a rather dense feel to the village as a whole, with in-fill building plots replacing the open gardens of previous years, to the detriment of neighbouring properties. Results from the questionnaire suggest that the majority of respondents would favour including the outlying ‘hamlets’ of the parish as possible sites for small developments as well as possible minor extensions of the existing village boundary (Q 2.13 ).

### 10.3 Housing Number, Mix and Tenancies

After WW2 there was a demand for council houses to be built in the villages and an area to the west of the main N-S road, now known as West View, was allocated for social housing, followed by further building of bungalow residences for older people in Manor Close. Further building of social housing has taken place on this west side of the road creating a clear distinction from the largely owner occupied developments taking place on the east side.

There are 9 housing association houses in Mountain View built to satisfy a demand for local housing, but since have failed to find enough local tenants.

Much of the original council house stock is now owner occupied.

During the 1960’s a large (for the size of the village) development of semi- detached and detached bungalows took place around “The Bells” pub, known as Bells Orchard, with others

of a similar age and style being built around the north side of the common. Some of these bungalows have been in-filled with other bungalows and then newer houses as the demand for bungalow style residences has declined.

#### 10.4 Homes for Local People

As stated above, the perceived demand for housing association type housing did not live up to expectation, largely because of the shortage of employment in the immediate vicinity. Local young people have found it necessary to live nearer to their place of work rather than cope with the difficulties of transport from rural isolation. A possible solution to home ownership for younger people is self build which received significant support in the questionnaire (q 2viii).

#### 10.5 Housing Needs

Housing needs were established by considering responses to the questionnaire and review of the 2011 Census, which outlined trends in the population of the area, household size and residents' age with the results of Herefordshire Council's Local Housing Needs Survey for Almeley Parish 2014

#### 10.6 Exception Sites

Responses from the questionnaire indicate support for the building of houses for the workers and families of local farms and businesses to ensure their survival in the parish (q 2ix).

#### 10.7 New Home Type and Size

Results from the questionnaire show that the most preferred housing stock would be 2-3 bedroom private detached houses. There was little support for the building of more bungalows or more social housing because of the poor take up of existing stocks by local people (q 2).

#### 10.8 Retirement Housing Provision.

There are 13 retirement bungalows in the village which are rented from the local authority, a number of which are occupied by people brought in from outside the village, an indication that there are sufficient for local needs.

#### 10.9 Scale of New Development.

The completed questionnaires support the building of houses as individual plots rather than larger numbers, but 3-5 may be acceptable on the right site. Larger scale housing and more "executive" 4-5 bed houses were rejected by most respondents (qxii).



## SECTION 11 DESIGN POLICIES.

### 11.1 Design

Much of the newer housing in Almeley is architecturally undistinguished and not in keeping with the locality and does not reflect the character of many villages within the local area. The construction of several small but dense housing developments since the 1960's was in sharp contrast to the open nature of the village. There is now an opportunity to enhance the built environment and improve the quality of the design aesthetic within the village, ensuring all new developments are sympathetic to the immediate surroundings.

### 11.2 Policy

Proposals for all forms of new development must plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design, at the same time demonstrating that plans have sought to preserve local distinctiveness and aesthetic qualities of traditional rural settlements within the area. Applications proposing unsympathetic designs which fail to respect the connections between people and places, or are inappropriate to its location, or pay insufficient attention to landscape and biodiversity, or issues of renewable energy technologies which may become more important in future, should be refused.

### 11.3 Design and Access

All proposals for significant new developments should, where required, be accompanied by a design and access statement to show how they have responded to the policies in the Herefordshire Core Strategy; the Almeley NDP; and include a clear vision for the type of place that could be created by building on the character and needs of the village as a whole, including road access.

### 11.4 Light Pollution and Urbanisation

Most Almeley residents wish to maintain the rural nature of the village and prevent increasing urbanisation and light pollution, so all proposals for street and external lighting should comply with current guidelines, ref. Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light, Institute of Lighting Engineers, 2005 (see comments).

## SECTION 12 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

12.1 Under the Localism Bill, Parish Councils will have increased decision-making powers when building plans are submitted for approval. Plans should be scrutinised for the possible effect on the environment, whilst meeting the needs of its inhabitants and sympathetic to existing buildings and surroundings.

Issues to consider will include:

- To minimise energy consumption, buildings should be carbon and energy efficient by providing effective insulation that meets or exceeds current building regulations, combined with effective heating;
- Maximum use of south facing aspect and windows should be encouraged for passive solar heating, and use made of solar water heating and photovoltaics;
- Roof run-off to water butts or underground tanks to provide a ready supply of water for irrigation purposes, laundry and car washing purposes.

## SECTION 13 OUR VILLAGE, OUR PARISH, OUR FUTURE.

From the responses to the questionnaire and following community discussions in the village hall, the following observations can be made:

1. Almeley has a great rural tradition that is valued by the majority of residents.
2. Young families require employment either home-based or in neighbouring villages/towns.
3. Schools need young families to be retained or move into the village.
4. An increase in the population requires better maintenance of the road structure and passing places.
5. Most services have to come into the village or be obtained outside by road.
6. An increasingly aging population will require adequate support from the NHS and nursing services.
7. Personal transport issues come to the fore when dealing with those not able to drive.

The NDP Questionnaire was designed to obtain information on aspects of life in the parish which are valued by residents, building on the Almeley Parish Plan published in 2004, and facilities they would like to see improved or supplied. Then, as now, many of the suggestions for the improvements are outside the scope and control of the Parish Council, broadband access, better bus services and roads; as well as a children's playground, and organised opportunities for young people. A request for volunteers to help fulfil these latter aspirations has, as yet gone unheeded, and funding is not likely to be forthcoming from other sources in the present financial climate.

## ALMELEY PRIMARY SCHOOL



ALMELEY VILLAGE HALL



## APPENDIX ONE

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### ALMELEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN QUESTIONNAIRE.

The Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire was sent out by post to 500 members of Almeley Parish in March 2014. The returns were analysed and published in June 2014.

The total number of respondents was 167, with a ratio of 2:1 females and males. The age profile of the respondents indicated that for both men and women the majority of returned questionnaires were from people aged over 60 (with a high percentage in the 60 – 74 age bracket). There was a low percentage of returns received from people in the 18 to 25 age group.

There were 6 categories of questions. The topics were: Personal Information, Parish Plan, Housing, Communication, Village Life and Transport. The Questionnaire also encouraged respondents to provide their own comments to the sections

In the Questionnaire respondents were asked what housing they thought would be required in the next 20 years. In reply the greatest response was for private 2- to 3- bedroomed housing, followed by self-build houses and exception sites (e.g. sites for agricultural workers 100+ in favour). There was a low response in favour of social/affordable housing and semi-detached bungalows (50+).

The majority of respondents (approx 100) wished to see single unit developments, 50 people wished to see medium scale developments of 3 to 5 houses and 10 people thought that there should be larger scale developments of over 6 houses.

In response to the question whether there should be future development inside or outside the Almeley village boundary, just over 50 people thought it should be inside and nearly 110 thought housing should be outside.

Regarding transport and the bus service 70 people said there was a good bus service, but over 100 people said that there it should be improved. However approximately 40 people said they never used the bus service, 10 people said that had made more than 5 journeys in the last 6 months and 7 said that they had made fewer than 5 journeys in the last 6 months.



Under Transport, 17 people wanted better road maintenance, 16 wanted more buses re-routed, 6 wanted a speed limit through the village. 7 people wanted speed bumps, and passing places; 6 people wanted better parking for the Church and the school, but 4 said that Spearmarsh Common should not be used as a car parking area.

The additional comments to the sections covered a broad range of issues and interests. However there were conflicting responses to many common concerns . Under Community, 6 people thought the village hall was excellent, 2 others said the village facilities were good, 3 people said there was a poor community spirit. 4 people thought the shop was excellent. 15 people wanted better all-round provision for younger families, 5 people wanted a Youth Club, 9 wanted a Children's Play area and 3 wanted a Mother and Toddler group.

The responses on Communications indicated that the greatest number of people found out information through the village notice boards and the parish magazine, followed by the village website. The Parish Council was low on the list followed by Email, Facebook and networking. The Broadband speed was considered adequate by 11 people, 24 considered it was not adequate and 24 people said it was poor. 3 said that Fibre optics were needed.

## APPENDIX TWO



### REGISTERED COMMONS AND OTHER ACCESSIBLE PLACES IN ALMELEY PARISH

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#### Introduction

There are eight Registered Commons, and these are also recorded under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. They are:

1. Spearmarsh
2. Logaston
3. Tan House
4. Meer
5. Hopleys Green
6. The Green (at Wootton)
7. Tomkins Green
8. Pool at Woonton

The following spaces have wildlife interest and are publicly accessible:

9. Holywell Dingle (already a Nature Trust Reserve)
10. Cokes Yeld Dingle
11. The Batch Dingle
12. Pond near the Hawthorns

### **1. Spearmarsh Common (Approx 1.4 Ha. Owned by Herefordshire Council)**

This Common is surrounded by Almeley Village. Several cottages were built on its fringes in earlier times. In 1859 a piece of it was given by Miss Foley (who was then Lord of the Manor and the owner) as the site for Almeley School. In 1922 another piece was leased as the site for Almeley Village Hall. Another adopted highway was laid across the Northwest side, possibly in the 1940's.

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was rough grassland and scrub, with rubbish pits and small ponds. It was sometimes used for grazing, and the Commoners' rights still exist. In 1959 the Parish Council with the agreement of the Commoners, cleared it, ploughed and seeded it; turning it into a playing field for the School and the parishioners.

The central part is now leased to Almeley Cricket Club, who maintains it as a cricket field.

The Parish Council mows the rest of it and planted several trees, probably in the 1980's.

The cricket outfield is still used by the school as a playing field and the whole area is used for informal recreation when it is not occupied by the Cricket Club or the school. There are seats and a parking area for about a dozen cars has been laid out between the School and the Hall, for use by both of them. The road along the Northwest side is not fenced and there are other accesses to the South and West. There is little wildlife potential, but birds and small mammals inhabit the surrounding hedges.

### **2. Logaston Common (Approx. 2.12 Ha. Owned by Herefordshire Council.)**

An open space, surrounded by fields and their hedges, and with 4 adjoining houses. It lies in a lower part of the Parish, near to Letton Lake, and one of the small streams which drain the Eastern site of the Parish flows past it.

Until fairly recently it was used for grazing by a nearby farmer, but is now reverting to scrub, which is cleared occasionally by the owner. Grazing has become difficult because of the problem of confining the animals.

There are footpaths and access tracks across it, but it is not much frequented. It has potential wild life interest.

### **3. Tan House Common (Approx, 1.40 Ha. Owned by Herefordshire Council.)**

Divided into two parts by a narrow lane. Higher by the same stream which passes Logaston Common. Both parts are tree-covered, including some coppiced hazel and surrounded by fields. Not much frequented, and the land only lightly trafficked. There was once a footpath through the lower part, which it would be useful to re-open for leisure walking. It has potential wildlife interest.

**4. Meer Common (Approx. 0.68 Ha. (No known owner))**

On higher ground. Part open space, part tree-covered, with a pond among the trees. Surrounded by fields and with 3 adjoining houses.

Some clearance was done in 1982/3 and the flora and fauna were surveyed under the Leominster Marches Project, probably by Herefordshire Nature Trust. This work was funded jointly by Leominster District Council, the Nature Trust and Commoners. Since then it has not been much managed, although commoners and other local people have done some clearance. It has potential wildlife interest.

**5. Hopley's Green Common (Approx. 1.35 Ha. Owner by Herefordshire Council.)**

On the same level and the same lane as Tan House. An open space covered with rough grass. A different small stream passes along the Western edge and there is a small pond surrounded by fields and two houses. The lane runs along the North side and there are access tracks cross, which are more frequented than Tan House. It has perhaps less wildlife interest.

**6. The Green (Approx. 0.2 Ha. Owned by Herefordshire Council.)**

Small open, grass-covered space, surrounded by fields and two houses. The lane from Hopley's Green runs alongside its Southern edge and meets a wider road which runs along its Western edge. It is occasionally used by the neighbours to park vehicles. It has little wildlife interest.

**7. Tomkins Green Common (Approx 0.2 Ha. May belong to adjoining farms?)**

Very small space between fields. Being remote, may have some wildlife interest.

**8. Pool Common (Approx. 0.04 Ha. Owned by Herefordshire Council).**

So called because it used to be a pool, which has long since been filled in, and is now grass covered and mowed by an adjoining resident.

Surrounded on two sides by the road from Woonton to Almeley and Logaston, and on the other two sides by houses, for which it forms an attractive setting. Hardly any wildlife interest.

**9. Holywell Dingle (Approx. 6.3 Ha within Almeley Parish)**

A deep cleft in the ground, tree-filled, and containing one of the three streams which drain the Western side of the Parish. It lies along the boundary between Almeley and Eardisley Parishes. It is managed by Herefordshire Nature Trust as a reserve.

**10. Cokes Yeld Dingle (Approx. 9.5 Ha. Owned part by Herefordshire Council and part by Newport House).**

This is the second deep cleft and stream, parallel to and half a mile East of Holywell Dingle, which it resembles in several ways.

The Northern part runs through the Historic Park of Nieuport. Some distance to the South of the great house, the stream has been dammed to create a substantial lake, which terminates the ornamental garden of the house. A public footpath crosses the Dingle along the top of the dam. The Dingle then passes between fields and it is crossed by the road from Almeley towards Quest Moor. The Dingle passes between more fields and, where it is crossed by the road from Almeley to Eardisley, it has been dammed again, creating another substantial lake. The dam carries the road and a similar embankment parallel to the road used to carry a railway line. South of these earthworks the stream runs between more level fields to join Letton Lake.

The Southern part of the Dingle, between the two road crossings, has a footpath which follows the stream. The piece of the Northern part, which is within the Newport garden is not accessible to the public.

The whole Dingle has many trees; the lakes contain fish and are used by several species of wildfowl. There is considerable wildlife interest.

#### **11. The Batch Dingle (Approx. 9.2 Ha. Part owned by Herefordshire Council, part privately owned).**

This the third deep, tree-filled cleft and stream, parallel to and about half a mile East of Cokes Yeld. This one is close to the village had and used in earlier times for a mill and brickworks and so on. It still contains five houses, and the remains of a Saxon castle – The Twt. Although the top of the motte mound is only roughly level with the surrounding fields, it stands where a tributary enters the Batch Brook and so is surrounded on three sides by a formidable steep slope.

The stream has been diverted, just above the Southern road crossing to form a lake. Below the road crossing, the cleft opens out to surrounding fields and the stream runs below the foot of the other Saxon castle, where it seems one to have fed fish ponds.

A public footpath follows the stream for most of the length, and this is widened to take vehicles to reach the various houses. Vehicle traffic is only that generated by the houses. The footpath is well used by local residents. In spite of being fairly well frequented, this Dingle has considerable wildlife interest.

#### **12. Pond near The Hawthorns (Approx. 0.01 Ha. Part of the highway verge, owned by a local farm).**

This is a long, narrow roadside pond, said to have a stone-paved bottom, and could well be an old animal-watering pond. It has become considerably overgrown with weed. It is fed by roadside ditches and its overflow is piped under the road to a ditch on the opposite side. Unfortunately, the overflow has been set too low, in an over-enthusiastic attempt to prevent flooding of the road, so the pond does not fill to its optimum level. This would be a



simple matter to correct. Any pond collects wildlife, and this one does, in spite of the proximity of the road. It would be attractive if it could contain suitable vegetation and if its water surface was more prominent.

#### SPEARMARSH COMMON



## **APPENDIX THREE**

### **Summary of Neighbourhood Plan Policies**

The Plan has been prepared to be in general conformity with the Core Strategy. This Appendix has been contains a summary of local policies in the Plan.

1. Assets of Community Value.

Proposals that will result in either the loss of an Asset of Community Value or in significant harm to Assets of Community Value will be strongly resisted.

2. Network communications and high speed broadband along with improvements in connectivity will be supported.

Applications for residential development will contain a 'Connectivity Statement' and will provide for suitable ducting to enable more than one service provider to provide a fibre connection to individual properties.

3. Community Services and Facilities.

Proposals for additional services and facilities within the parish will be supported, subject to the requirement that an individual proposal will not generate disturbance to adjoining residential properties. Traffic congestion will be avoided and street parking will not impinge on adjoining residential and non-residential users.

4. Developer Contribution.

New development must provide additional new facilities and infrastructure as required by Herefordshire District Council.

5. Pedestrian Footways.

All new development must, where appropriate and practical, provide safe pedestrian access to link up with existing or proposed footways, ensuring that residents can walk safely to village facilities.

6. Car Parking.

Proposals for new homes in the parish should provide for garages or off-street parking for each dwelling, unless justified having regard to site-specific circumstances.

7. Green space and Landscaping

Any development shall include a landscape strategy which will include a condition survey of trees and hedges, accompanied by an outline of the measures taken to protect them. Consideration of both near and distant views of the development from the principal vantage points and how those areas will be retained for open space and/or woodland will be managed in the future.

8. Historic Environment.

Any designated historic heritage assets in the parish and their settings, including listed buildings, monuments and conservation areas will be conserved and enhanced for their historic significance and their importance to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place.

9. Housing.

The Plan will provide opportunities for housing to meet the needs of existing and future residents of the parish. Objectives will include consideration for shared-ownership. Affordable housing, which will subject to a local connection, meaning that people with a strong local connection to the parish and whose needs are not met in the open market will be first to be offered the tenancy or shared-ownership of the home.

Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes for rural exception sites where housing would not normally be permitted, will be permitted, particularly where they can demonstrate the redevelopment of brownfield sites.

Type and Size of Homes.

This policy considers that new development should favour smaller dwellings, including 2-3 bed housing, self-build houses and exception sites. Single-unit and

medium scale (3-5) development preferred. Large-scale development (6+) will not normally be considered.

#### 10. Good Design.

Proposals for all forms of new development must include high quality and inclusive design. They must demonstrate that local distinctiveness and the traditional qualities of rural settlements and buildings have been conserved. Applications proposing unsympathetic designs which fail to respect the connections between people and places, are inappropriate to its location or fail to consider renewable energy technologies will not be permitted.

## APPENDIX FOUR

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