

**NOVEMBER UPDATE From LLangarron ward Councillor  
Elissa Swinglehurst, serving the parishes of**

**Welsh Newton and Llanrothal, Llangarron, Marstow, Sellack, Bridstow and Peterstow**

Well, here we are in lockdown again. Please take care of yourself, your family and your neighbours. Stay safe.

The community response that was so fantastic earlier in the year stands ready to help – if you have any problems please reach out to any of the community groups that serve your area or to the council via the talk community hubs.

[talkcommunityenquiries@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:talkcommunityenquiries@herefordshire.gov.uk).

### **Planning.**

It is always interesting to follow a planning application through the full journey to see what happened – the end of the road is usually the planning inspectorate.

Recently there were two appeals determined in the ward by the planning inspector. In both cases the applications were recommended for approval by the planning officer, in both cases the applications were referred to the planning committee and in both cases the planning committee went against the officer recommendation and refused the application. Both applications were then determined by the planning inspectorate.

In one case the principle issue was whether or not the proposed site was within or adjacent to the main built settlement. In the view of the planning officer it was – or at least it was not isolated, having other houses nearby – in the view of the committee the location was not within or adjacent to the settlement and therefore policy RA3 (open countryside) should be applied and the proposal was in conflict with this policy. The planning inspector in this case concluded that the site was not within or adjacent to the main settlement and, other houses nearby notwithstanding, it would not represent sustainable development.

The other case had a different issue, there was no debate at all about its location within a settlement identified by the local plan core strategy as suitable for proportionate growth. The issue here was the size of the house. The parish has already met its target growth so the inspector felt that there was no reason to allow housing that did not meet the local need for smaller homes. This is consistent with the local plan core strategy RA2 housing reflecting local need.

I made one presentation to the planning committee this month but the committee decided that they needed more information before they could make a determination so the application was deferred which was slightly frustrating as I had spent the whole day in the meeting waiting to speak!

Update – I have just received notification of two more appeals that were dismissed on the grounds of ‘harming the character and appearance of the local area’ and ‘likely significant effects on the SAC’. Actually these are really interesting appeals as they are for the same site – the first appeal was against the initial refusal, contrary to officer advice, by the planning committee; the second appeal was for an adjusted application that responded to the first refusal by reducing the impact on the

character and appearance of the local area' but left some degree of uncertainty about the foul drainage provision. Neither application was, in my view, outlandish – but it does go to show that an NDP (even a non site allocated one) is a useful thing.

#### A Meeting with the Minister

As a Conservative I have the opportunity to feed ideas in via the Conservative Policy Forum – I have to confess that I rather imagined that the output from the CPF is politely received and then lost somewhere behind a Whitehall filing cabinet. Turns out I was wrong. Due to some comments I made about soil security I was invited to join a roundtable discussion with the Rt. Hon. George Eustace. There were about 10 delegates from other policy forum groups and the discussion was well informed and far reaching – the overall focus was on the environment and covered topics like ensuring environmental and animal welfare standards post Brexit, how to build back 'green' post Covid. It was really good to be able to speak directly to the minister and raise concerns/offer solutions. Just as he was winding up the meeting I had to get one more question in.... 'are we banning live export now we are out of the EU?' His answer was a pretty straightforward, 'yes, it's in our manifesto'.

#### Covid.

Because you receive separate updates on the CV19 response in the county I would only be repeating what you already know. However there are some bits of positive news that are coming out as a result of the pressures of the pandemic and, whilst it is early days, there is some cause for cautious optimism. One area that has taken a giant leap forward is homelessness – because of the Government's policy that no one is left out, the council have been able to provide homes (temporary in the first instance) for a group that is notoriously hard to reach. This has led to some very excellent work in finding permanent solutions and we are ambitious enough to be aiming at zero homeless people in Herefordshire.

Before the pandemic the council were working on BWOW (Better ways of working) – the lockdown has meant that this has moved forward at the speed of light and now it is becoming quite embedded as a behaviour across the organisation where practical. It means more zooming and less driving – which in my view is a no-brainer.

#### Should we be a National Park?

I attended a Hereford Civic Society event the other evening (thank you HCS for a great event) – at which Jesse Norman MP outlined his vision of a Herefordshire National Park. I think that this is a really interesting idea but I was a bit unclear as to how it would be different from AONBs as the intention seemed to be to create something distinct from the existing national park model (where there is a separate authority and a different set of planning rules etc). What is needed are some energetic people to drive it forward to the next stage, Jesse Norman felt optimistic about our chances once it has started to gather momentum. I am attracted by the opportunity to celebrate the character and landscape of our county – as I said to the meeting – we are not the same as other places, we need to value what we have and work with that – do what is right for Herefordshire. Personally I am getting concerned that the thing we love about our county is eroding before us – the

gradually changing nature of our little villages, the increasing industrialisation of our countryside. I would like to see a positive vision of our county that keeps all that is worthwhile and good.

To bring us back to planning – if the government is going to require more houses (and there is every reason to expect that they will) then it will fall to the local authority to have a plan to accommodate them. I am increasingly convinced that the best way to do this is with a radical vision – a new town – something beautiful and amazing where, because you are building to scale, there are the highest possible standards of sustainability, fantastic open space, cyclepaths, woodland, lakes, a pub, a cricket pitch, church, school, shop – somewhere designed with a range of residents in mind, the young, the old and everyone in between. Not soulless little boxes made of ticky tack – somewhere wonderful where people want to live. I prefer that to nibbling away at the countryside and destroying the intimacy of our village life.

But that's just my view.