

Wyre Piddle Parish Council Reply to the SWDP Review – Revision 1

Wyre Piddle is a category 4B village, which is a village “which has low/medium level of public transport provision and low services/facility provision”. Wyre Piddle has a low level of public transport provision, and no services within the village, apart from a public house. Therefore the nearest shopping centres are in Pershore and Evesham, which for most residents are not within walking or cycling distance for shopping.

The Strategic/Significant Gap Between Wyre Piddle and Pershore.

The interactive development plan map that accompanied SWDP 2016, shows that the significant gap is outside development boundaries both for Wyre Piddle and Pershore, and is thus defined as open countryside according to the SWDP 2016 document, SWDP 2C.

Current housing and employment developments are already proposed or built that border the significant gap (SWDP 47/1 and 47/2).

The Local Plan 2006 stated in SR10 that “In order to protect their setting and prevent the coalescence of settlements and within the defined Strategic Gaps, as shown on the Proposals Map, will be kept open and essentially free of development. Minor development proposals may, however, be permitted if they do no harm, individually or cumulatively, to the function and purposes of a Strategic Gap, or to its open character”.

The SWDP 2016 states in that “Development proposals should ensure the retention of the open character of the significant gaps” (SWDP 2D). It also states that “development proposals should ensure the retention of the open character of the Significant Gaps”. The Significant Gaps are then justified by SWDP 2016 by pointing out that the purpose of maintaining these gaps, which serve as a buffer or visual break between rural settlements and adjacent urban areas, is to provide additional protection to open land that may be subject to development pressures. This designation helps to maintain a clear separation between smaller settlements and urban areas in order to retain their individual identity. Acceptable development proposals within a Significant Gap would be the reuse of rural buildings, agriculture and forestry related developments, playing fields and other open land use and minor extensions to existing dwellings.

For at least 10 years, the Strategic/Significant Gap has been of importance to Wychavon Council, but now they want to do away with it, and it is apparent that if this happens Wyre Piddle and Pinvin will be subsumed into Pershore and the village will lose its identity and gain nothing. Why has there been a sudden change of heart over our Significant Gap?

Wyre Piddle Parish Council object strongly to the removal of our Significant Gap and insist that it is at least maintained at its current location, but we would consider that extending the gap to the South and East down to the Piddle Brook would mitigate the proposed development south of Wyre Road by the Travis Perkins site.

Development Boundary

In the evidence that was presented with this SWDP Review, the Development Boundaries Review stated “that the purpose of a Development Boundary is to direct development to the more sustainable locations, prevent encroachment into the open countryside, therefore protecting its character” Therefore it is unclear why Wychavon Council want to unilaterally remove the development boundary to Wyre Piddle, and why it is considered no longer appropriate. It appears that such changes are to allow developments to be put on any land that developers can obtain where no development boundary exists.

Since the 1960's, there has been significant development within the village, with housing developments at Avon Green; Church Farm; Poplar Avenue; Brook Way; Willow Bank; Haines Avenue; Ryelands and George Lane, as well as individual developments along Worcester Road; Main Road and Evesham Road.

Much of the land that is identified on the SWDP Review interactive map of Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) that is within the Wyre Piddle parish boundaries, is outside the development boundary shown on the SWDP 2016 on the interactive map, and is thus classed as open countryside, where development will be strictly controlled.

However the proposal is to remove the Development Boundary from around Wyre Piddle. This will lead to pressure for infill development on land that was previously just outside the development boundary of the village. This appears to be allowing development by stealth and is opposed by the Parish Council. We wish to have the existing Development Boundary retained.

The SWDP 2016 development strategy was to "Safeguard and (wherever possible) enhance the open countryside and to focus most development on urban areas, where both housing need and accessibility to lower-cost public services are greater. The removal of the development boundary would appear to at odds with development strategy. As a category 4 village, we consider that further development outside the existing development boundary would be detrimental to the character of the village.

Strategic Growth Area

Item 17 of the SWDPR identifies Throckmorton Airfield as a new settlement, although it does not show or give any indication as to the strategic Growth Area that will take in land outside of the airfield. The Parish Council has become aware of a Strategic Growth Area (SGA) that is shown on a map to the North of Wyre Piddle that extends from Pinvin to Upper Moor and is either side of the A44 (Wyre Piddle Bypass). This Strategic Growth Area is not identified in your SWDP Review. Neither is the Strategic Growth Area around Throckmorton Airfield, where the maps that have been shown to us only has a star to indicate the approximate site of a development. Currently the land bordering the Wyre Piddle Bypass (A44) is showing as land that has been offered for development.

Obviously, Wychavon Council's plans have gone far beyond a star on a map, in the case of Throckmorton Airfield, and it is disingenuous of the Council to withhold information that would have a significant bearing on people's comments, when the current published information about these areas is very short on detail.

Some of the land that has been identified in the SGA is land that is known to flood regularly both from fluvial and surface water. Developments in these and other areas to the North will increase the risk and frequency of flooding in other areas despite SWDPR 33.

This SGA bordering both sides of the A44 (Wyre Piddle Bypass) is currently in the open countryside and is intensively farmed. There is no reason why perfectly good farm land that is still being used to grow crops should be developed. Wychavon Council should first use all brownfield sites to build upon before considering any greenfield sites.

As previously mentioned, Wyre Piddle is a category 4B village with no services and limited transport provision. Additional housing on the scale proposed on the SGA will have a significant effect on services in Pershore and the existing infrastructure. The proposals will ruin the integrity and identity of the village. In the SWDP 2016 it states that villages of a lower category than category 3 have a limited role in providing additional future development. It seems that policies are changed to suit developers rather than the residents of these areas.

The table associated with SWDPR 2 states that Category 4 villages are unsuitable locations for facilitating growth and that there are no allocations (for development) so we are extremely confused regarding the SGA map which is not in public circulation but produced by the Council, and what the Wychavon Council appear to be saying in their SWDP Review document.

The Parish Council oppose any development on this land, which should be left in cultivation.

Access to Throckmorton Airfield

SWDPR 50. The proposed development on Throckmorton airfield is not within our parish boundary, but may have adverse effects on the village, especially if roads are built to link up with the A44 close to the village.

Currently, there is a proposal to create a road from the roundabout on the A44 which leads to the landfill site. This will cause more congestion on the roads around Wyre Piddle and will almost certainly mean that Wyre Piddle will be used as a route to and from Pershore, missing the roundabout and congestion near Pinvin, especially if there is a major development immediately North of Wyre Piddle. This will negate the benefit that the Wyre Piddle Bypass brought the village. However, lack of detail in the SWDPR means that there is little to comment on at this stage. It would make more sense to have two roads leading onto the A44, one to miss the Pinvin crossroads, taking traffic towards Worcester and one leading towards Evesham. This would prevent significant backing up of traffic at the Pinvin crossroads.

Existing Infrastructure

The parish council is also concerned about the existing infrastructure in the Pershore area, that will be significantly affected by proposed developments.

Whilst item 10 of the SWDP Review speaks about viability assessment for sites, this appears to be only for new sites and does not discuss existing infrastructure. SWDPR 6 mentions infrastructure that is required to deliver the development, which might take in roads, schools and GP surgeries, but no sustainability appraisals have been carried out to see what effects there might be on the surrounding existing developments.

On non-strategic developments, there will be no new shops, schools or surgeries. This will no doubt be good for the existing shops, but there will be parking issues with more cars vying for limited parking spaces. There will be increased waits for doctor's appointments. The parish council also found nothing in item 11 and SWDPR 7, Health and Wellbeing, regarding the hospitals in the area, which will also be affected by an increase in the local population.

SWDPR 32 relates again to new developments, but these developments even with sustainable drainage systems may increase water in existing surface water drains, ditches and culverts, and it is essential to include these in any development plan to prevent unexpected flooding as a result.

Whilst it is the aim of the SWDPR to reduce car use and to increase walking and cycling, and the aim in the Worcestershire Local Transport Plan 4 to create a Vale West Strategic Active Travel Corridors (SWAT 5), there is currently no funding for this scheme. There is no pathway/ cycle path between Wyre Piddle and Pershore, making walking and cycling hazardous.

Any development plan must take into account the need for improvements to all existing infrastructure.

Flood Risk

Whilst SWDPR 32 and 33 are all very well and good, water will run downhill towards the rivers and streams. Wyre Piddle lies on the banks of the River Avon and will thus be already susceptible to flooding. Surface water captured by new development and diverted into surface water drains will usually discharge into watercourses. With a lot of water in the drainage systems, water will flow more quickly into water courses and could cause flooding as a result. SWDPR 32B ii states that developers “will ensure no increase in flood risk or harm to third parties”. How is this to be managed, and should more flooding be caused as a result of development, what remedy would the Council apply to the developers? I would suggest that it would be very difficult to prove that a development has caused an increased flood risk, and thus a more robust inspection of proposals will be required at the planning stage, and an increase in staff both in the office, to ensure that the designs are adequate, and on site to ensure that the work is carried out correctly. It is well known that developers will try and minimize costs when they are on site and cut corners for the sake of keeping on programme. Given the extent of flooding that has occurred in Worcestershire, it is imperative that flood mitigation and sustainable drainage systems are rigorously inspected. Will you be increasing your staff to ensure that work is regularly inspected?

With potentially more water entering existing watercourse more quickly, there is more risk in flooding in these areas. What policy will deal with ensuring these watercourses will be maintained, and what guarantee do we have that they will be maintained?

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