

Lichfield District Rural Planning Project



ALREWAS
ARMITAGE WITH
HANDSACRE
FAZELEY, MILE OAK,
BONEHILL
LITTLE ASTON
SHENSTONE
WHITTINGTON



Lichfield District Council
November 2011

1. Introduction and Background to the Village Reports

1. In March 2010 Lichfield District Council started a process of rural planning for six of the most substantial settlements within Lichfield District outside of the two main settlements of Lichfield and Burntwood. The rural planning work has fundamentally been about engaging local communities in considering the future of their areas. The process is explained in more detail below but has involved not just the District Council talking to people, but getting villagers to discuss possible options for change within their village with each other, particularly through a series of local 'workshops' held in February 2011. These highlighted particularly where there was consensus or a divergence of views over important characteristics, the key issues and options for change in each of the villages. Further exhibitions to feed back the outcomes of the workshops, and to seek further comment, were held in September and October 2011.

2. For the District Council an important part of the context for this work is the preparation of a revised Development Plan for the District, the Local Development Framework (LDF). As part of the evidence for the LDF a

study carried out by the District Council identified Alrewas, Armitage with Handsacre, Fazeley/Mile Oak, Little Aston, Shenstone and Whittington as the six rural settlements with the greatest range of facilities and services and best transport connectivity within the context of the rural part of the District. This led to the view that it would be important to look at the future of these settlements in particular and to consider how they could remain vibrant and viable settlements in the long term, how they might change and how planning policies might contribute positively to their future.

3. This report describes what has happened so far in the rural planning process for these settlements. It is also intended to enable the work of rural planning to continue, particularly by providing a basis for further discussion between the District Council and local communities and within the communities themselves. The report should therefore be seen as an interim step in a longer planning process, but it is essentially about the factors that are relevant to working towards a vision for the future of each settlement that can emanate from and be owned by each local community.

4. The report includes a discussion about each village that concludes by suggesting some guiding principles for

its future and draft vision statement. These are intended to promote further public discussion and involvement in the future of the villages. They could also help the Local Development Framework to be more locally specific in relation to each of the villages.



Whittington Village

Purposes and structure of the report

5. The report has been set out so that it considers each settlement separately and in some detail. It is thought that local communities will find this helpful in taking their thoughts on the future of their settlements forward. It enables the separate sections of the report to be progressed independently, although regard always has to be taken of the overall context of each settlement within Lichfield District and the wider area. **N.B. Whilst the overall report is dated November 2011, it should be noted that the**

individual village reports are dated September 2011. These reports were then consulted upon to gain further feedback, and the concluding chapter makes a series of final recommendations as a result. The report has been prepared in this way to clearly document the process of community engagement over the full period of the project.

6. The report has a number of more specific purposes, particularly in the light of the Local Development Framework process, but also because of proposed changes to national legislation that are aimed to empower local communities to have more influence and a more direct role in the planning of their future.



A workshop at Fazeley

Local Development Framework Evidence:

7. As part of Local Development Frameworks local planning authorities are required to prepare a Core Strategy and may also prepare Allocations of Land Documents. Lichfield District Council is in the process of preparing both types of Document. The Core Strategy will set a policy framework that will provide the main policy context for future planning decisions, particularly in relation to the scale and general location of the main changes proposed to take place across the District. An Allocations of Land Document will be specific in terms of which areas and sites are proposed for development. Both of these main parts of the Local Development Framework will need to be subject to independent testing through a public examination by an independent Planning Inspector. These examinations will scrutinise the evidence that has been used to inform the policy decisions made. Plans will need to be based on sound evidence and the evidence includes the views of local people. The Council will need to show what these are and how it has taken them into account in preparing its policies. The Rural Planning Study will therefore form a significant component of the evidence to be taken into account in preparing the

Local Development Framework, particularly the Core Strategy.

Resource for Local People to consider their areas further:

8. The report contains summaries of what people said about issues affecting their village and about options for change, including the question of future housing development. It is hoped that the summaries can provide a resource for considering the issues further. The Council intends to feed back on the work so far to each of the communities involved during 2011.

9. The report also includes, for each settlement, the views expressed by an independent facilitator following the 2011 workshops and a summary of other evidence gathered by the Council as part of the LDF process, that might need to be considered alongside local views. Both of these aspects of the report also provide a further resource for communities to use in considering their futures. Thus it may be used in support of the preparation of Parish Plans, or perhaps for 'neighbourhood plans' where there is agreement on the need for such plans to deal with particular areas of change.

10. While the main report contains summaries of views and evidence, a₃

series of appendices for each village contains more detailed information, for example plans of past development of each village and plans prepared from the workshops results, showing what people found to be important about their village. The original workshops information has been published on the District Council website at: www.lichfelddc.gov.uk/ruralplanning

Recommendations for the Local Development Framework:

11. The Council is in the process of preparing a revised version of its emerging Core Strategy, taking account of an extensive public consultation exercise carried out between November 2010 and February 2010. The timing of the rural planning public involvement allows this report to feed into the Core Strategy revision process. This report therefore includes recommendations for the Core Strategy preparation and LDF process deriving from the rural planning exercise. In particular it considers the potential scale of housing growth that could be accommodated by the six settlements concerned, potential or preferred directions of growth and suggested elements of a vision for the future of each settlement for the purposes of the Local Development Framework.

2. The 'Rural Planning' Process

12. As noted earlier the District Council had identified the six settlements involved in the rural planning project through a study of the rural settlements within Lichfield District. This was completed in 2008. The Rural Settlements Sustainability Study considered in some detail factors relevant to the needs of living in the rural communities of the District. It looked at which facilities were available within each village, such as schools, shops, community halls, doctors, dentists etc. It looked at the quality of public transport access to facilities that would not be expected to be available within villages, such as secondary schools, hospitals and town centre facilities. It also considered whether there was local employment or good access to other employment centres.

13. Out of this process the study defined a 'hierarchy' of villages within Lichfield District and the six villages included in the further rural planning work were identified as those having the best overall range of facilities. In terms of planning this identifies them as the settlements having the best degree of 'self-containment' and most opportunities for living a 'sustainable' lifestyle, in the context of the rural communities of Lichfield District. A consequence of this is that it becomes

important to consider whether they offer opportunities to contribute to any future housing needs arising in the District, since creating and maintaining 'sustainable' communities is a most important objective of national planning policy.

14. To enable residents of the villages concerned to become more involved in the future of their village whilst the LDF process was progressed, the District Council sought the involvement of an outside organisation, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). Its role was to facilitate open discussion about the villages and to prepare a subsequent report to the District Council. The discussions took place through workshop group sessions in February 2011. They included the consideration of the character of each village, current issues, the needs each village might have in terms of future housing and the role they might play in contributing to district housing requirements.



A CABE facilitator presentation at a workshop event February 2011

15. In order to make these sessions successful and helpful locally considerable preparatory work was first carried out by the District Council, including a series of exhibitions in the summer of 2010 where questionnaires were handed out seeking views on local issues. The results of these provided a framework for a workshop held in November 2010, held for Parish Councils, key local stakeholders and District Council Members. The outcomes from this were used at the February events held for each village. The events consisted of an exhibition presenting the information so far – including summaries of what people had said to date, and asking people to show whether they agreed or disagreed and to add additional comments via ‘post-its’. The individual village reports show where there appeared to be

consensus about particular issues and where the results of the February events showed less consistency with the earlier views obtained.



People commented on issues using sticky dots and post-it notes.

16. The individual reports on each village, which can be read as separate documents, are therefore based upon three sets of information gathered in 2010 to 2011, these being the questionnaire responses, the November stakeholder, Councillor and parish workshops and the February events facilitated by CABE. Summaries of the November workshops are contained within the Appendices for each settlement.

17. The numbers of questionnaires and attendance at events are shown in the table below. There are perhaps issues over the overall ‘sample size’ of the numbers of people who expressed views during the process so far and whether it is sufficiently representative, for example in terms of age groups, since it was clear from the workshops that they were attended by predominantly ‘older’ age groups.

Village	Questionnaire responses – summer 2010	Workshop attendance – February 2011
Alrewas	26	150
Armitage	21	60
Fazeley	22	70
Little Aston	15	85
Shenstone	23	100
Whittington	25	75

However overall it is considered that workshops attendance and participation were good. This view is supported by the range of issues and views generated by the process. The result is a significant base of views that enables both the Local

Development Framework and more work at a local level, to be carried forward. The numbers participating in the Workshop discussions for each village are shown in the Table below.

Village	Participants in Workshop discussions
Alrewas	40
Armitage	23
Fazeley	25
Little Aston	10
Shenstone	30
Whittington	22

The findings and suggestions from these events were reported back to communities in Autumn 2011 and further comment was invited. This is covered in detail in the concluding chapter of this report.

3. Housing

18. Two principal issues that the District Council has to consider within its Local Development Framework are

the questions of the scale and distribution of future housing growth. New housing is always a controversial issue locally, but the Council has to consider whether individual settlements can contribute towards meeting an overall need. For these reasons the question of future housing need and growth is given specific consideration in each of the village reports that follow.



Housing under construction at Lynn Lane Shenstone

19. There are a number of District-wide issues related to future housing needs that are explained below. They are relevant to the consideration of housing at an individual village level, particularly to the settlements considered in this report, since these are the villages with an existing range of services and facilities that are potentially most able to contribute towards a District need and where,

because of their size, some of the rural local need is likely to arise.

20. In setting out its policies and proposals for housing, Lichfield District Council has an obligation, through national planning policy, to take account of evidence relating to housing need and to provide a sufficient quantity of housing, taking account of need and demand and seeking to improve choice, a specific national housing objective.

21. The District Council has commissioned work on housing needs within Lichfield District to provide evidence for the Local Development Framework. These include a Strategic Housing Market Assessment that covers a sub-region including Birmingham, Solihull, Tamworth and Lichfield District, completed in 2008. In addition a Rural Housing Needs Assessment was completed in 2009. Most recently new population and household forecasts have been made (2011) that are at a District level. Much of the evidence relating to housing need within Lichfield District is summarised within the Homes for the Future Topic Paper published alongside the Draft Core Strategy in January 2011.

Population and household forecasts:

22. In terms of the overall future housing need of Lichfield District, forecasts of future households living within the District have consistently indicated that there will be a significant rise at District level when considered over a 20 or more year period. Such forecasts have shown variations, mainly related to recent trends and the economy, but all have projected significant growth. A number of District-level projections were made for the preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the period 2006-2026 and all of these indicated a need for additional households to be accommodated within Lichfield District. The most recent household projections prepared by Staffordshire County Council show an increase in households for Lichfield District of around 9,000 households between 2008 and 2028, and 10,500 households from 2008 to 2033. It is against this general context that the District Council must consider future housing requirements. Lichfield Council along with Cannock Chase District Council and Tamworth Borough Council have now commissioned a specific study to examine the range of evidence affecting future housing needs and delivery. This will be completed early in 2012.

23. It is important to note from the forecasts, that of the increase of 9,000 households forecast from 2008 – 2028, only around 2,300 arises from ‘natural change households’ (i.e. locally derived from within Lichfield District), with the remaining 6,700 households arising from projected migration.

24. In addition, changes in the types of household that are forecast show that the natural change increase is as a result of a large increase in single person households, while there is a decline in all other types of household. The migration element of the forecast however comprises mainly family households but also with single person households, so that overall, while the largest increase would be in single person households, there would also be a significant increase in one family households. Change in households cannot be directly translated into a need for specific housing sizes or types, but it is significant to note that although there is a wide public appreciation of an ‘ageing’ population nationally, at a local level the need will not solely be for smaller house types, and a mix of housing will therefore remain as a requirement.

25. Generally the town planning system is not aimed at restricting open market housing provision to meeting a local need, in fact, taking account of

demand and widening the choice of housing for people are national planning objectives. In the open market, less housing availability means a restriction of choice, increased competition and an effect upon house prices, so that Local Development Frameworks need to determine the appropriate level of new provision taking account of these factors alongside all others, such as the local environmental impacts of new developments.



New housing at Fazeley

26. A further aspect of the forecasts to note, which is particularly relevant to villages, is the continuing fall in the average size of households, resulting particularly from the increased numbers of people living alone. This is clearly illustrated by comparing the ‘natural change’ forecasts of population with those of households. Between 2008 and 2033 the District population is forecast to be almost,

static, showing a slight decline by 2033, to 97,150 compared to 98,040 in 2008. For the same period however, the number of households that the population is living in is forecast to increase by 2,278, from 40,231 to 42,509.

27. Considered the other way round and translated into housing, if there were to be no change in the number of dwellings in a settlement, there would be fewer people living in the settlement. This is of particular importance to those villages that currently have a range of services and facilities that serve a local market. Can such facilities be retained given a declining population and would some housing growth have any effect in helping to retain them? It is relevant to note here that it is only through the migration element of the household forecast that there is any increase in family households.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA):

28. This assessment considered housing needs within an area covering Birmingham, Solihull, Tamworth Borough and Lichfield District, but it contains findings that provide relevant context to the consideration at a village level. It indicated a general context for Lichfield District of a high proportion of private housing stock

(86.6%), the lowest social rented stock (13.4%) of the four areas, a small private rented stock, a relatively high proportion of detached dwelling types (37.9%) and of four bedroom homes (29.5%). It divided the area into local housing market areas.

29. For rural parts of the District the SHMA showed:

- In 'Lichfield North', which included Alrewas and Armitage with Handsacre, very high rates of owner occupation, more than half the dwellings being detached, high house prices coupled with high household incomes and very low rates of social housing and other affordable housing
- In 'Lichfield South East', which included Little Aston, Shenstone and Whittington, very high priced detached housing, a very low rate of one and two bedroomed properties, a low proportion of terraces and apartments, a low supply of social housing; it was the least affordable housing sector in the sub-region.
- The SHMA included Fazeley/Mile Oak in the Tamworth housing market area, which showed a relatively small private rented sector, relatively fewer properties with one or two bedrooms, a slight undersupply of smaller properties and that it was more

affordable than many other parts of the sub-region.

30. In addition, the principal conclusion of the SHMA report, which was aimed at assessing affordable housing need, was that there was a significant annual need for affordable housing within Lichfield District as a whole and this was not being met by the existing stock of affordable housing. In terms of the types of affordable housing needed it suggested that for the District, it should be 44% in two/three bedroom properties and 54% for single person households. Importantly it also showed that there was a need for affordable housing provision to be made in all of the rural housing markets of the District as well as in Lichfield and Burntwood.

Rural Housing Needs Assessment:

31. The Rural Housing Needs Assessment was carried out through a questionnaire survey, the results of which were considered in four rural 'sub-areas' of the District. The areas defined were slightly different to the Strategic Housing Markets Assessment in that Whittington was included in a 'rural south east' area, separated out from 'rural south', which included Little Aston and Shenstone.

32. The results of this assessment are specifically considered where relevant within the specific village reports. It should be noted that the assessment does not provide definitive assessments of local need in terms of level of provision. It does, however, contain information on existing housing prices, affordability and stock, on the suitability of housing to meet peoples' needs, on the movement of households within the housing stock – for example patterns of local migration (where people have moved into a sub-area from), and upon local residents views on the need for new housing development.



Recent housing development at Armitage

Housing and Social Profiles of the Villages:

33. The villages within the Rural Planning Project each have a unique character and features that are

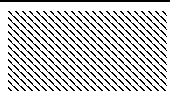
relevant to the consideration of housing issues within them. Some of the settlements originate largely from former agricultural rural communities, whilst Armitage with Handsacre and Fazeley, Mile Oak and Bonehill have a significant industrial past. These two villages in particular had significant post-war housing development that related to employment, whilst Alrewas, Shenstone and Little Aston became largely commuter settlements. The origins and history of the settlements influence today's villages and this can be seen in their 'social profiles', which are included as **Appendix 1** for each of the village reports, and in statistics related to existing households and housing.

34. The Tables opposite provide a 'snapshot' profile of housing and household statistics from the 2001 Census that remains relevant to the villages today. The Tables show significant variations between the settlements in the levels of owner occupation and availability of social housing. The figures relating to pensioner and lone pensioner households may be relevant indicators towards the consideration of matters relating to 'downsizing', (an issue raised in a number of the workshop events), and to future needs for supported or specialist housing for the elderly.

Village Reports:

Approach taken in the Village 'reports':

35. A separate report on each of the six villages has been prepared, based upon the rural planning work to date. It seeks to combine the 'fine-grained' evidence derived from the local knowledge of residents on the issues, needs and potential of each village, the output from the CABE facilitator and more broadly based evidence from studies carried out for the preparation of the Local Development Framework. The purpose is to put local 'anecdotal' evidence alongside more specialist studies as relevant information that could contribute to the development of visions for future change for each of the settlements. Some conclusions are then drawn for each village. These include recommendations for further testing on an appropriate level of housing growth for the Local Development Framework, a set of principles to assist in determining and guiding actions, a draft vision statement that sets a more general approach to the future, and some potential locations for housing development, take into account the findings contained within the village reports.

	Total H'holds	% Owner occupied	% Social Rented dwellings
Alrewas	1,863	80.8	11.8
Armitage	2,134	80.6	11.8
Fazeley	1,914	68.2	22.3
Little Aston	1,074	95.5	1.2
Shenstone	1,269	82.5	9.7
Whittington	1,292	79.2	7.5
Lichfield District	37,500	79.0	13.5
Source: 2001 Census			

	Pensioner households %	% Lone pensioner households
Alrewas	22.7	12.0
Armitage	19.5	10.6
Fazeley	25.5	14.2
Little Aston	28.2	11.0
Shenstone	24.1	12.9
Whittington	21.1	10.4