

Stroud Pre-submission Local Plan Chalford Parish Council Response

Chalford Parish Council is broadly supportive to the pre submission local plan and agrees with the thrust of new housing development concentrated in major settlements and the Severn Vale.

We also fully support the stronger policies protecting green spaces and wildlife plus policies that enforce carbon neutral status. We are fully supportive of further protection of the AONB with intent to protect the AONB as a priority. We are pleased to see under DCH1 a reference to garden grabbing and suggesting this could be a reason for refusal.

Our major concerns are as follows:

1. We would like to see greater emphasis on protecting ecological corridors as highlighted in the Stroud District Open Spaces and green infrastructure study. The green corridor separating Bussage and Chalford is an important and ecological feature which has proved vulnerable to development pressure in the recent past and we are determined that this should remain inviolate. This should be made more explicit in the delivery policies.
2. Although the concept of settlement boundaries are unchanged in our Parish there is now much more leeway given to permitting development outside, adjoining the boundary. This is set out in DCH2 and applies to Tier 3b and 4 settlements. We feel that this change of policy is misguided. It will make it very much easier for developers to build outside the village boundaries and in practice will render settlement boundaries porous and almost impossible to defend. Although it is claimed this will be geared to addressing social imbalances and meeting purely local needs, we know from our own experiences at the Middle hill Development in Chalford that the practical outcome is somewhat different.
3. We do not agree with the classification of Chalford as a Tier 3a settlement. Despite 4 years of lobbying, Chalford Settlement Boundary has not been split into Hill and Vale (including St Mary's). In the updated Settlement Role and Function study it was stated "The Local Plan defines a settlement development limit for Chalford that encompasses both "Chalford Hill and Chalford Vale" and treats this as a single Tier 3 settlement, although there is an argument that the two areas function quite separately due to the steep topography and their constrained road links between them.

Our reasoning is as follows:

If we look at the individual settlements within the last decade you will find that Chalford Vale has lost a primary school, a pub (might reopen) and a post office whereas Hill has lost a Church (closing Easter 2022) a butcher shop and an electrical store.

Chalford Hill at present has a Pub, a primary School and a pre School, plus an hourly bus route to Stroud. (Monday to Saturday)

Chalford Vale has a Church and Hall, a Community Shop, an infrequent mobile Post Office and playing field. There are 5 busses a day to Cirencester and Stroud.

So combining the communities there are two Churches, a pre school, a primary School, a community shop, a pub and two separate bus routes. There is a mobile Post Office (we believe it is still functioning) which stations itself outside Belvedere Mews on a Monday and Thursday for an hour each. Totally impossible to access from the plateau there is also a playing field at the valley bottom.

Compare that to Manor Village (also a Tier 3A) which has two strategic sites (secondary school and a petrol station) plus a village centre comprising of a Tesco Express, a chemist, a take away and a doctors surgery. Also a village hall and Youth Club and an open space, Frith Wood.

We can see no logic to keep the Hill and Vale combined as one settlement area as both the topography (some 600 ft height difference) and road links make these two separate communities.

