

Marden Parish Meeting

The Land Adjacent to The Volunteer Inn Housing Proposal

1st October 2026 – Marden Parish Hall

Meeting Summary

About the meeting

57 parishioners attended

A parish meeting, the first public event in the new parish hall, to hear about a proposal for up to 54 houses on The Volunteer Inn site. It is a proposal at this stage, not yet a planning application. The chair, ran the meeting. Residents' names have been left out, as promised on the night.

Who presented

- **Rob Garnham**, Mediation in Planning, who ran the consultation. 33 people came to the drop-in earlier that afternoon.
- **Jamie Lewis**, the planner, from Howard Cole Planning.
- **Tom Froggatt and Rhys Bennett**, the architects, from RRA Architects.

The proposal

Up to 54 houses on a site of about 2.6 hectares, including turning the pub buildings into 3 homes. The application would be submitted in November.

- It would be an **outline** application: only the entrance would be decided in detail now. House designs, layout and materials would come later.
- About **19 of the 54** would be affordable homes.
- 54 is the maximum. The number could fall, depending on drainage, the entrance and other findings.
- Surveys done so far: heritage, wildlife, landscape, highways and drainage. No noise survey yet.
- The developers' case: Herefordshire hasn't enough land set aside for housing and the Parish plan is out of date. Herefordshire Council still does not have a Local Plan, and the government have increased national housing targets. National rules favour building next to existing villages.

Timetable

1. Feedback gathered and considered, with possible changes to the plans.
2. Application submitted in November.
3. Residents can then comment formally to Herefordshire Council.
4. The council has 12 weeks to decide, though it may take longer.

How to give feedback

Use the card handed out at the meeting, which shows the outline plan and has a questionnaire on it.

- **Online** (preferred): the web address is on the card.
- **On paper:** fill it in and post it through the letterbox outside the parish hall. It will be collected and passed on.

Main concerns raised

The mood in the room was substantially against the proposal. These were the main points.

- **Sewage:** Welsh Water have commented on a nearby live application saying that the existing system has no spare capacity and there are no plans to upgrade it. The developers propose a package treatment plant on site, emptied by lorry. They could not say how often lorries would come or how much space the plant needs, as they are waiting to hear from Welsh Water. They said running costs would fall on the developer through a legal agreement, not on residents.
- **Traffic:** The developers estimate 23 vehicles in the morning rush hour and 26 in the evening. Residents strongly disputed this, reckoning the houses would bring 80 to 120 cars in all.
- **Roads:** Residents described damage from lorries and heavy farm vehicles. The developers said road repairs are the council's job, and planning can only be refused on access grounds if there is a serious safety risk. One resident argued the business causing most of the damage should pay for it.
- **The entrance:** There is only one way in, raising worries about emergencies. One resident objected to any change that would send traffic past his house. Another suggested moving the entrance away from the corner and giving land to widen the road. The chair pointed out there is no room for a Refuse lorry to turn. The developers will speak to the highways authority before submitting.
- **Whether Marden can cope:** Flooding, roads, school places, buses and sewage were all raised. With 90 houses already approved, that would mean about 144 new homes in five years. The council recently judged

Marden unsuitable for further development; government policy has since changed forcing more housing on Herefordshire.

- **What the parish gains:** The planner said the scheme does not have to benefit the village, only pay towards things like school or GP places if they are full. Herefordshire has no general building levy, so the parish only gets money it negotiates. An earlier development brought about £360,000, but only because that landowner pushed hard for it.
- **The pub:** Many wanted it kept as a pub, put up for sale, or offered to the community to run. The developers said earlier attempts were not financially workable, but they will have to justify losing the pub in the application.
- **Previous refusal:** The site was turned down in the last village plan because other sites scored higher. The parish council cannot run its own comparison of sites at this time, given the delay in the Local plan.
- **Noise:** From a nearby works, with tractors from about 4am.
- **Drainage:** A ditch near the site floods neighbouring fields.
- **Future building:** The landowner owns more land nearby. The planners said they knew of no further plans, but residents worried it could set a precedent.

Other points

- Bungalows are planned behind the listed building, to protect its setting.
- The play area sits near the entrance; people suggested moving it to the middle of the site or add to the existing play area at the recreation ground.
- The northern corner of the site is set aside for drainage ponds, not play but is very small.
- Marden is a "dark skies" parish, and low-level lighting is proposed.
- The bus stops by the pub would stay.
- One resident felt the houses have to go somewhere, and the site itself is fine, but the access is not.
- Someone asked for fewer houses with bigger gardens. The developers said 54 is the maximum and could come down.

The precept

A resident asked whether more homes would lower the parish precept. Over half the current precept goes on paying for the hall, which falls each year until it is paid off in about 30 years. The council's policy is to reduce the precept as that falls, though growing demands passed down from the county council may limit this.