

The Forester



Incorporating Dean Forest Mercury, Dean Forest Guardian and Lydney Observer

January 6, 2021

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Another landmark for Hartpury's Liza
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Homes plan 'not fit for purpose' after floods

THERE is mounting concern as acres of farmland surrounding a potential site for 4,000 homes at Churcham are under water, while the main route into Gloucester has been closed twice over Christmas.

Six parish councils campaigning to halt the Coleford-sized township, say the Forest of Dean District Council must deal with the flooding issues in the area before making any decisions on large-scale developments where the local road infrastructure is 'not fit for purpose'.

The development site straddles the border of the Forest district and Tewkesbury borough leading to Highnam Roundabout. It is on prime farmland owned by a prominent local farming family, who have been in talks with a county developer, which advises the council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

by Mark Elson
news@theforester.co.uk

More than 10,000 vehicles use the A48 and A40 into Gloucester and beyond on a daily basis. This could see a 50 per cent increase if the Forest of Dean District Council's Preferred Option in the Local Plan goes ahead, say campaigners.

During the Christmas period the vital A40 dual carriageway link between Highnam and Over roundabouts was shut twice because it was under water. And the main A417 route from Maisemore has also been closed because of flooding. There are fears the resulting gridlock brought about by both these issues and the new development could have a serious impact on the Forest's economy.



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Fields at Churcham that could be used for housing under flood water. Photo: Nigel Steele

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The Forester is published by Tindle Newspapers Wales and Borders Limited from The Tindle Suite, Kings Buildings, Hill Street, Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 5HE. Printed by Newspapers (Broxbourne) Limited, Great Cambridge Road, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire EN8 8DY. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.

Weather Watch

By Jonathan Powell

Everydayweather.co.uk

Forecast: Chiefly dry but some scattered wintry showers. Feeling raw. Frost and ice.

Thursday Scattered showers. Day 2C/36F Night -2C/28F in Southley. Light north-easterly.

Friday Dry, sunny spells. Day 2C/36F Night -2C/28F in Peter-stow. Light northerly.

Saturday Dry, sunny spells. Day 2C/36F Night -2C/28F in Huntley. Light northerly.

Sunday Scattered showers. Day 3C/37F Night -1C/30F in Stroat. Light westerly.

Monday Scattered showers. Day 5C/41F Night -1C/30F in Flaxley. Light south-westerly.

Tuesday Dry, sunny spells. Day 4C/39F Night -1C/30F in Foy. Light south-westerly.

Wednesday Dry, sunny spells. Day 5C/41F Night 0C/32F in Hardwicke. Light south-westerly.

Outlook: Essentially settled. Staying cold.

Sunrise: 8.18 a.m. Sunset: 4.19 p.m.

Moonrise: 1.17 a.m. Moonset: 12.23 p.m.

Chemists' Rota

A pharmacy is open between 10am and 2pm on Sunday, January 10 at: Your local Boots Pharmacy, 9-11 Market Street, Cinderford (01594 822332)

If it is necessary that you have an URGENT (as written by your doctor) prescription dispensed when no pharmacies are open, you should contact your GP or the police who will be able to help you.



A large part of the moat wall at St Briavels Castle fell last week, following heavy rain

Rain brings down castle wall

HEAVY rain managed to do what Welsh border raiders couldn't - by bringing the wall crashing down at St Briavels Castle.

A large part of the moat wall fell last week, forcing a section of the 12th century heritage site and modern YHA to be cordoned off.

Persistent downpours caused giant bits of masonry from the 15ft high defensive wall to tumble overnight on Monday, December 21.

And a YHA St Briavels Castle spokesperson said: "We sadly have to report that a substantial part of the Medieval wall surrounding the internal garden has collapsed during recent heavy rains.

"As there is a risk of further collapse both internally and externally a large section of the moat has been fenced off by English Heritage.

"If you are visiting or live in the local area please be aware that access to the moat is restricted and it is important to keep only to the

by Nick Hartland

news@theforester.co.uk

permitted areas for your safety."

A spokesperson for English Heritage added last week: "We can confirm that a section of the inner bailey wall at St Briavels Castle has collapsed following the recent bout of heavy rainfall.

"The damage has occurred in an area inaccessible to the public, and the YHA is currently closed to guests.

"English Heritage staff are currently working with specialists to make initial repairs to this section of the wall before embarking upon a project to rebuild the wall.

"In the meantime English Heritage staff, YHA staff and local volunteers are working together to monitor the wall over the Christmas period.

"English Heritage is a charity which cares for over 400 historical places across the country and

around 75 per cent of these are free to enter - including St Briavels Castle.

"Income generated by members and visitors help us to carry on our vital work to maintain and repair historic sites like St Briavels."

St Briavels was an important royal castle overlooking the Wye Valley on the frontier with Wales, and the administrative and judicial centre of the Forest of Dean.

Built in the early 1100s, it was the residence of the warden of the Forest of Dean - a royal hunting ground where the game was protected and the king alone allowed to hunt.

It was rebuilt in the late 1100s with the small but impressive keep by Henry II, and thanks to the Forest's medieval iron industry, became a regional centre for making crossbow bolts.

The crossbow was the favourite weapon of the mercenaries who were employed in considerable

numbers by Henry's son, King John, who built a new hall and chamber block at St Briavels and stayed there five times on hunting trips.

Under Edward I, thousands of crossbow bolts were produced at the castle in preparation for the king's Welsh and Scottish campaigns.

Edward took care to ensure that his arsenal was well protected, adding the massive twin-towered gatehouse to the castle in 1292.

People took to social media to have their about the damage to the wall.

Melanie Jones posted: "So sad, let us know about any fundraising to help with repairs."

And Annie and Trevor Davis added: "That is a shame. Hopefully no more damage will occur but with the cold weather approaching the last thing you need is frost and ice getting into exposed weakened areas."

Homes plans 'not fit for purpose' after floods

Continues from Front Page

Chair of Churcham Parish Council Councillor John Francis, who described a catalogue of misery for residents stranded in the recent floods, said: "The Forest of Dean must deal with the flooding in the A40 and A48 areas before any decisions on large-scale development takes place. The routes into the Forest have been cut off twice over the Christmas period causing misery and chaos - as well as making national headlines.

"What are we doing to people's lives and livelihoods? This flooding is not a new occurrence, it has

been happening for years. What is the Forest of Dean Council doing - apart from helping themselves to another piece of turkey as we pump out our homes?"

Fellow campaigner on neighbouring Highnam Parish Council, Councillor Charlie Coats, was equally vocal in addressing the infrastructure needs before a new township is considered.

He said: "The local road infrastructure is not fit for purpose to cope with current levels of traffic, let alone any increase arising from additional development at both Churcham and Newent. In addition

to flooding-related problems along the A40 and A48 west of the Highnam Roundabout, recent flooding has closed the A40 dual carriageway along by Over Farm up to the Over Roundabout.

"The A417 Ledbury road at Maisemore has been closed for several days and, based on past experience, traffic from that direction will be funnelled through Upleadon onto the B4215 once it starts to ease, creating more congestion as it funnels onto the A40 at Highnam.

"If the Forest of Dean District Council are serious about this initiative they

need to engage, before they determine their Local Plan strategy, with both Highways England and Gloucestershire County Council to secure significant investment to tackle these perennial problems."

The councillors' views are endorsed by the six parishes opposed to the development: Churcham, Minsterworth, Huntley, Westbury-on-Savern, Blaisdon and Highnam.

Since the Council's Preferred Option was presented and accepted for consultation by the full council in October, residents in the six parishes have distributed 7,000 leaflets urging

residents to take part in the consultation process which runs until January 29. They have raised a petition, placed banners at strategic road junctions in the area and set up a website and Facebook page to get their message across.

To learn more about the campaign and sign the petition to challenge the Local Plan visit: www.your-say.uk To express your views to District Councillors about the overall housing and infrastructure Local Plan, visit www.fdean-consult.objective.co.uk and click on Local Plan Preferred Option. The deadline is January 29.