

38 The Close
Cleeve Prior
Worcestershire
WR11 8LF

Mr S Arble
Clerk to the Parish Council
36 The Close
Cleeve Prior

31st December 2013

Dear Sean

I have just received the disturbing Rooftop flyer stating its intent to submit a planning application to develop six social housing dwellings to the south of The Close. As a concerned parishioner I am compelled to remind the Council of the resolutions it made during the summer of 2012. Sensibly, the Council decided it would strongly oppose the planning application when submitted and engage a professional consultant to help ensure this was done as effectively as possible. As the composition of the Council has changed significantly since the original decision was made, I shall restate the reasons why the Council should act now in support of its 2012 resolutions.

MARCH 2012 PETITION LETTER & 2012 CLEEVE PRIOR RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION SURVEY

A cross section of approximately **100 parishioners** from across the village signed a letter to the Council objecting to the Rooftop proposal. In my 20 years as a resident of Cleeve Prior I believe a petition of this magnitude is unprecedented. A significant percentage of the village (twice the number of a very large turn-out for the Froglands Lane Proposal Meeting) has given the Council clear guidance in this matter.

In 2012 Cleeve Prior Residents Association carried out a survey designed to directly ascertain parishioner opinion on development in the village, to provide support for the Council's decision making. All 230 households in the village were surveyed, 8 were not occupied, 8 refused to participate, **155 responses were collected**; this represents a **70% return**. **76% of the respondents were against the Rooftop proposal to develop a 6 dwelling social housing site south of The Close**. These two documents make it clear that the weight of villager opinion is against the Rooftop planning application. Balanced against no demonstrable support for the proposal, the Council should, as the representative body of the parish, act immediately. It should represent the views of an overwhelming number of parishioners by following through with its resolutions and urgently engage a planning consultant to oppose the application.

NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Government's emerging direction on planning policy within the Localism Bill and National Planning Policy Framework plans to give direct power to local communities to plan the areas in which they live. When Rooftop deliberations originally took place the NDP process was in its infancy. Now, some 15 months later, the NDP process has progressed significantly. Indeed, this development is the only material difference between now and the summer of 2012. One key reason the Council objected to the Froglands Lane application was the fact that a substantial development would undermine the NDP process.

The proposed Rooftop development is initially for six houses but the flyer clearly shows a design intended to eventually develop the entire Bostock Field with social housing. The southern end of the proposal is left as a parking area which can easily be extended into a road opening up the remainder of the field for future development. I understand that the Council did discuss the design with Rooftop, but Rooftop refused to entertain the idea of capping the development with a house at the bottom of the development. If the proposal goes ahead the precedent will have been set for the development of the whole of the Bostock field, rendering the NDP redundant. The Council has entrusted several hard working and dedicated volunteers to steer the NDP. It would be very damaging to the process for the Council to now make a premature unilateral decision about the future of the village, which it would be doing if it does not follow through on its earlier resolution to strongly and effectively oppose the development (and which would clearly be against the wishes of the majority of the villagers).

SUSTAINABILITY

National Planning Policy Framework lists three elements to sustainable development:

1. Economic

To quote the Council, “Cleeve Prior is not a suitable place for (additional) affordable housing. It is a Category 3 village with very limited employment opportunities in the village.” Urbanizing a field adjacent to a small rural village boundary with little prospect of employment, transport or amenities, is not indicative of the right land in the right place.

2. Social

A reasonable prediction for a 6 dwelling development as outlined is that it would house 26 people. The likely population density of this proposal (~10,349 in/km²) is about six times the current inhabitant density of the village and higher than Birmingham, the largest city in the Midlands.

Because Cleeve Prior is a Category 3 village, the residents of the Rooftop proposal would need to travel for employment and amenities. The Close is already a busy road which struggles to cope with the current volume of traffic. It is often unsafe due to the narrowness of the road surrounding a green and the issue is exacerbated by parked cars. Additionally, exiting The Close is very dangerous due to limited visibility up Main St toward the school and cars often parked directly across from the T junction. The expected increased traffic of at least 30 extra daily car journeys in and out of The Close will significantly aggravate the existing problems and place residents at a higher risk of accident.

3. Environmental

“...contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment”...“mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy”. An urbanization of a local amenity does not meet these environmental criteria. The lack of local employment and poor public transport ensures travel to work will be by car, thus increasing vehicle movement and carbon emissions.

CONSERVATION

During the 2008 Cleeve Prior Conservation Area Assessment, the Parish Council appealed to Worcestershire County Council (WCC), for the fields south of The Close, including Bostock’s Field, to be included in the Conservation Area. One reason to include the fields in the Conservation

Area was to protect the views to the church from a southerly direction. Ultimately and imprudently, WCC did not incorporate the area in question into the Conservation Area, however, this decision in no way diminishes the importance of the views or the delight many parishioners experience while enjoying the Millennium Green and other amenity fields nearby. Because the Rooftop proposal would urbanize the character of the village, the Council should seek to safeguard the heritage of Cleeve Prior by preserving the much cherished views.

FLOODING

Bostock's Field regularly floods in winter; in fact, it was flooded yet again only a few days ago! The proposed development would create a large hard standing area thereby placing one of Cleeve Prior's prime amenities, the Millennium Green, at an increased risk of worse flooding than it already experiences.

NEED FOR SOCIAL HOUSING IN CLEEVE PRIOR

There is no Worcestershire County Council or Wychavon District Council document I am aware of which specifically states Cleeve Prior is in need of social housing. The village currently has 10% of its dwellings dedicated to social housing and many consider the Traveller Sites as a form of social housing by any other name. With the recent large housing developments in and around The Littletons, Evesham, Pebworth and Honeybourne, most of which include social housing elements, it is difficult to understand why Cleeve Prior specifically needs more than its generous current supply of social homes.

SCHOOL

Many assumptions need be made to draw the conclusion that the Rooftop proposal will safeguard our primary school from closure. To my knowledge, there has been no evidence produced which clearly indicates six additional social housing units will create a thriving school. The Council has little or no power to ensure local families with children will move into the properties. Indeed, when one surveys the demographics of the current social housing residents of Cleeve Prior, it seems clear that a large majority of the households do not include primary school age children. Furthermore, even if a few of the proposed properties do eventually include school age children, there is no guarantee these children will attend Cleeve Prior 1st School. While I was very happy to send my children to Cleeve Prior, I recognise the fact that many families in the village choose not to do so.

In conclusion, I believe these points clearly demonstrate that the proposed development must be opposed by the Council and present compelling reasons why the Council must follow through on the resolutions it made last year; namely, to oppose the Rooftop proposal and engage a professional consultant to ensure effective opposition. I trust the Council will continue to represent the Parish as effectively as it has in past years and look forward to a reply.

Regards

Phil Bannister