

**Cleeve Prior Neighbourhood
Development Plan 2014-2030**

**Pre-Submission Draft for
Consultation**

Cleeve Prior Parish Council

May 1st 2015

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Cleeve Prior Plan is a Neighbourhood Plan, produced under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. It has been prepared by the Cleeve Prior Parish Council, which is the “appropriate body” for the preparation of the document. Essentially, the plan is a community-led framework for guiding the future development and growth of the village and its surrounding parish. It has been compiled having regard to the emerging policies of the submitted South Worcestershire Development Plan 2013, and the “saved” policies of the Wychavon District Council Local Plan 2006.
- 1.2 The Neighbourhood Plan has also been checked against government policies in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance 2014. Within the national and local frameworks, the plan is concerned with the detailed use and development of land in the parish in the period to 2030 and beyond. In accordance with national policy the plan seeks to promote sustainable development and embraces a range of social, economic, and environmental issues. It contains a vision for the parish, aims and objectives, and a set of planning policies and proposals.
- 1.3 A wide range of topics are covered in the document, including the environment, village design and character, housing, employment, and infrastructure, all of which are important for the future of the area and its residents. The planning proposals include the allocation of some sites for specific types of development, as well as identifying those sites and areas which should be protected and enhanced. It is important to stress, however, that this document deals primarily with the development and use of land in the parish. Wider community aspirations are considered, but not all these can be delivered with land use policies. For this reason, the non-land use matters are clearly identified and are set out in Annex 1 to this plan.
- 1.4 The Neighbourhood Plan is based on proactive involvement with the local community at all stages of plan preparation. As a result of this process of engagement, the plan captures the essence of life in the village. It seeks to ensure that the vitality of life in the area continues, whilst not inhibiting innovation and social developments.

- 1.5 Once the plan has been formally “made” by Wychavon District Council, it will form part of the statutory development plan for the area, together with the South Worcestershire Development Plan and any other development plan documents adopted by the District Council. The Neighbourhood Plan will be the starting point for the determination of all planning applications in Cleeve Prior and the basis on which Wychavon District Council will determine applications on behalf of the local community.
- 1.6 Before formally submitting the Neighbourhood Plan to Wychavon District Council for examination, Cleeve Prior Parish Council must first publicise the draft plan and invite representations. They must thereby bring it to the attention of people who live, work, or carry on business in the neighbourhood plan area. This is the purpose of this document.
- 1.7 The consultation period lasts from 1st May to 30th June 2015. Copies of this document can be viewed on the dedicated web-site www.cleeveprior.org.uk and can be obtained on request from CleevePriorPlan@outlook.com. Hard copies are available for inspection in Cleeve Prior at the War Memorial Village Hall, the First School, the King’s Arms public house, the village shop, and the Field Barn Heritage Centre. In addition, the plan is available to view at the Wychavon District Council Civic Centre reception area in Pershore.
- 1.8 Shortened copies of the plan have been distributed to every household and business in the parish, together with a response form. Any comments on this draft plan must be submitted in writing, either on-line, or by post, addressed to Cleeve Prior Parish Council by the date stated above.
- 1.9 Following the period of consultation, the draft plan will then be revised in the light of any comments received by the Parish Council. It will then be submitted formally to Wychavon District Council, who will undertake further public consultation and invite representations. The District Council will also appoint an independent examiner, who will check that the plan has met the basic conditions enshrined in legislation. Subject to a successful outcome, the plan will then go forward to a community referendum. If the majority of the people voting are in favour of the plan, it will be “made” by the District Council as part of the statutory development plan for the area.

2. The Village and Parish of Cleeve Prior

- 2.1 Cleeve Prior is located between Evesham and Stratford upon Avon, on the border between Worcestershire and Warwickshire. It is a small community: the 2011 Census returned a parish population of 561 persons, in 247 households. The comparable figures for 2001 were 540 and 226 respectively.
- 2.2 The village lies astride the B4085 road, which runs from Bidford on Avon to Evesham. It sits above the flood plain of the River Avon on the long low ridge of Cleeve Hill. The local landscape is of an open and gently undulating character, with a grid of arable fields, defined by mature hedgerows. To the south, the long views from the village are framed by the Cotswold Hills. To the west, there are spectacular views over the Avon river valley towards Ragley Hall. Both Bredon Hill and the Malvern Hills can be seen from areas within the parish boundary.
- 2.3 The centre of the village forms the Cleeve Prior Conservation Area that includes St. Andrew's Church, the War Memorial Village Hall, the Cleeve Prior Church of England First School, and the King's Arms public house. The widespread use of blue lias stone and local detailing through all building periods give the village a strong character and identity.
- 2.4 The B4085, Main Street, curves sharply at each end of the village, with narrow lanes branching off, either terminating at the river to the north-west, or reducing to tracks and bridleways to the south east. A small triangular patch along the length of Main Street marks the former presence of a village green or common area. This framework of roads, lanes and tracks is likely to be mediaeval, or earlier, in origin and appears to be little changed. Clusters of individual houses, cottages, and farm buildings line both sides of these thoroughfares, with little uniformity in the spacing between buildings or their relationship to the roads. This pattern contributes much to the overall character of the settlement and its particular sense of place.
- 2.5 The continuing significance of agriculture throughout Cleeve Prior's history is clearly illustrated in the presence of numerous former farm buildings, mill houses, and farm houses, dating from the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. These are present throughout the village and the surrounding area and are also a significant element of its character and special interest.

- 2.6 As a consequence of the historic pattern of development, there are many open spaces in the Conservation Area that make a key contribution to its overall character and special interest. There are many important public views, both from within the village and from the fields beyond. Residents and visitors are able to walk directly from the main streets along public footpaths, which lead almost immediately into open countryside. The maintenance of this immediacy allows the village to retain its rural character.
- 2.7 All of these spaces and the pattern of development collectively make a significant contribution to the overall character and appearance of the village. They reflect very much the origins and history of the settlement and the parish over many centuries. It is this essential character which the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to conserve and enhance into the future, whilst still facilitating sustainable growth.

3. The Methodology: An Iterative and Inclusive Process

- 3.1 The Neighbourhood Plan has been assembled in full consultation with the village community. Early in that process, an Open Meeting with parishioners was held at the War Memorial Hall in the autumn of 2011. Its purpose was to seek views about the issues which should be addressed by the Plan.
- 3.2 A wide range of topics was debated, but the meeting generated two key statements, which indicated the primary concerns of residents, as follows:

“The Conservation Area is seen as one of the aspects of the village which defines the village and should be protected.”

“Cleeve Prior First School is a key asset to the village. If it was lost to the community then there would be a dramatic effect on all aspects of Cleeve Prior life. The demand for houses in the village and the attractiveness of the village in many different aspects would be affected. Therefore, it was recognised that supporting the school would be a key element to the Cleeve Prior Plan.”

3.3 The Steering Group set up by the Parish Council considered these statements and the points which had been made at the Open Meeting. It was determined that the key issues of the plan would be grouped as follows:

- Housing and Development
- Employment
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Other
- The future of the Gypsy Site

3.4 The methodology for the generation of the plan was set out in the Policy Discussion Document of April 2014. The report describes the sources of evidence which were considered and analysed by the Steering Group as the possible basis for policies in the plan. Evidence included previous documents produced by the Parish Council, such as the Parish Plan 2006, and the response from the community, via questionnaires and meetings. This iterative process covered the period from the autumn of 2011 to the spring of 2014.

3.5 During the consultation process, a wide range of concerns and policy suggestions were raised by local residents and organisations. Having considered these ideas, the Cleeve Prior Plan Committee considered that the emerging policies should be underpinned by some or all of the following criteria:

- Support from an organisation in the village
- Support from a significant number of parishioners (typically more than 10)
- Appropriate for inclusion as a policy in the Cleeve Prior Plan
- Support from the majority of the Plan Committee.

From this analysis, many of the policy suggestions were discarded because they did not fulfil these four criteria (see paragraph 3.7 below).

3.6 The iterative process of preparing the plan has been focused on four main “pillars” of policy - these are Housing and Development; Employment; Education, and; Infrastructure. Throughout the process, there has been increasing speculation and debate about the future of the Gypsy and Traveller Site on the Evesham Road. Although this site is outside the core of the village, its future is of critical importance for the planning of the area.

3.7 The discussions have been wide-ranging, and inevitably many of the suggestions made by residents have been excluded from this plan because they are not appropriate for inclusion in a planning document. The next section contains the vision for the parish which has emerged from the consultation process. This forms the overall basis for the objectives and policies which are presented in Sections 4 and 5 of this plan.

4. The Vision

4.1 During the spring of 2014, an Open Forum was held with residents in the War Memorial Hall. At the meeting, the dialogue was focused on the issues which had been highlighted in the April 2014 Discussion Document and the range of potential policies and proposals set out within it. During May 2014, a questionnaire form was sent to all households in the parish, asking for views on particular issues which had been raised in earlier rounds of consultation. A copy of the questionnaire and the results are included in the Statement of Public Consultation.

4.2 From the results of the questionnaire, the meetings, and the representations and suggestions made from earlier consultations, an extended vision for Cleeve Prior was agreed by the Plan Committee. This is set out in the following paragraph, which is followed by a set of objectives for the plan.

4.3 By 2030 and beyond, Cleeve Prior will:

- Continue to be a thriving village, with close links to the surrounding countryside;
- Retain its attractive character and protect and enhance the Conservation Area and its setting;
- Improve and enhance the local landscape and the range of wildlife habitats and species;
- Continue to be a lively and inclusive community with a range of facilities and services;
- Retain and develop the local first School and the range of educational facilities;
- Provide and develop infrastructure to enable safe and sustainable access to village facilities for children, the elderly, and families.

4.4 This vision forms the basis for the objectives of the Plan, as follows:

- Overall Aims:
 - To protect and enhance the Conservation Area and the local landscape;
 - To protect and enhance the historic environment of the village and the parish;
 - To protect and enhance the village's network of open spaces;
 - To utilise land efficiently and to protect high quality agricultural land;
 - To mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.
- Housing and Development
 - To provide a limited amount of housing for local needs, including a range of affordable housing for Cleeve Prior residents:
 - To provide a mix of housing types, including smaller homes for the elderly and for young people seeking to establish their first home:
 - To ensure that any new development is built to a high quality of design, a high sustainability standard and reinforces local distinctiveness:
 - To ensure that the location of new development is resilient to the effects of climate change and flood risk.
- Employment
 - To support and strengthen the local economy;
 - To foster home working.
- Education
 - To maintain and enhance the range of education facilities in the village.
- Infrastructure
 - To maintain and develop the range of village service and facilities;
 - To improve community and public transport and access to services and facilities by foot and by cycle;
 - To reduce the harmful effects of through traffic;
 - To improve broadband access.

4.5 These objectives have been “mapped” against the strategic objectives of the emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP). The linkages show the high degree of conformity between the Cleeve Prior Plan and the SWDP. These relationships will be monitored and reviewed throughout the plan period and the policies of this plan will be amended as and when necessary.

5. The Planning Policies

5.1 This section sets out the planning policies for Cleeve Prior for the period 2015 to 2030, which is consistent with the plan period for the South Worcestershire Development Plan. In accordance with legislation, a neighbourhood plan must meet “basic conditions” before it can come into force. These “basic conditions” are as follows:

- the plan must have appropriate regard to national planning policy
- it must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- it must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the local area
- it must be compatible with European Union (EU) obligations, including human rights requirements.

5.2 At the time of compiling this document, the current development plan for the area consist of “saved” policies of the Wychavon Local Plan, which was adopted by the local planning authority in 2006. When it is formally “made” by the District Council, the Neighbourhood Plan, in tandem with the Wychavon Local Plan, will form the statutory development plan for the parish. As explained below, considerable regard has been paid to the emerging policies in the draft South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP), which is currently under examination. When it is adopted in 2015, the SWDP will replace the Wychavon Local Plan. There is a commitment to a review of the SWDP in 2019, and the Parish Council will review the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that its policies remain in general conformity with the SWDP.

5.3 Together with the results of public involvement and consultation, the Parish Council considers that the plan fulfils the requirements of legislation and satisfies the “basic conditions”. The ensuing policies and justification are set out below. These are arranged in the same order as the “pillars” of concern set out in paragraph 3.3 and in the objectives in Section 4 above.

Over-arching Policies

5.4 The context for the Neighbourhood Plan is formed mainly by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the emerging South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP). Regard has also been taken of National Planning Practice Guidance, introduced by the government in on-line format from March 2014.

Sustainable Development

5.5 In these documents, there is a commitment to the principles of sustainable development, which is included in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy *Securing the Future* (2005). Five “guiding principles” of sustainable development are set out as follows:

- living within the planet’s environmental limits
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- achieving a sustainable economy
- promoting good governance, and
- using sound science reasonably.

5.6 These principles are reflected both in the Wychavon District Local Plan and in policy SWDP1 of the submitted South Worcestershire Development Plan. The Cleeve Prior Plan is fully committed to the principles and to the delivery of sustainable development. In accordance with the objectives of the SWDP, it seeks to protect and maintain the strong community which binds the village together, whilst protecting and enhancing the environment. At the same time it supports the development of the local economy in a way which respects the overall character of the village.

Policy CP1

Support will be given to development proposals that accord with the principles of sustainable development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and the South Worcestershire Development Plan.

Conservation and Heritage

- 5.7 From the responses to successive rounds of consultations, it is clear that the local community greatly values the village Conservation Area and its historic character. This reflects very much the thrust of the South Worcestershire Development Plan, which seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment. Various heritage assets are identified in Policy SWDP6, including designated assets such as listed buildings and Conservation Areas, as well as archaeological remains and historic transport routes. These provisions are amplified by Policy SWDP24, on the management of the historic environment, which seeks to conserve the setting of existing assets. There are many listed buildings in Cleeve Prior which will continue to be protected under legislation. Many are constructed of the local blue lias building stone, which is characteristic to the area. There are also a number of walls and other linear structures built in the local stone – these also need to be regarded as heritage assets and should be protected.
- 5.8 In Cleeve Prior the Conservation Area defines the heart and character of the village, which is protected under the terms of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. An update of the Conservation Area Appraisal was produced by Wychavon District Council in 2008. This included an extension of the Conservation Area boundaries and has been used as an instrument of decision-making since its publication. It has formed a key input into this plan.
- 5.9 The Conservation Area Appraisal included references to a number of important public views, both into and around the designated area. Several vantage points from outside the village provide an appreciation of the village in its rural landscape setting. There are particularly good views from public footpaths and bridleways to the north, east, and west of the village. Within the Conservation Area, there are other notable views – the village green from Main Street, the church from its approach paths, and the buildings fronting Cleeve Road at its junction with Main Street. These key views are shown on the Proposals Map: their continued protection is essential to maintain the essential character and visual appearance of the Conservation Area.

Policy CP2

The Conservation Area will be protected and enhanced. In particular, the following areas will be protected from development:

- Existing boundary walls and other linear features, particularly those constructed of blue lias stone;
- Open spaces contained within the Conservation Area;
- Significant public views in and around the designated area, as shown on the Proposals Map.

Local Green Spaces

- 5.10 The NPPF enables local communities, through Neighbourhood Plans, to designate areas of land as Local Green Space. Within these areas, there will be a general presumption against new development other than in “very special circumstances.” From the consultations with the local community, it is clear that there are a number of areas of open space, both within the Conservation Area and elsewhere in the parish, which are highly valued. These areas are described in more detail in the ensuing paragraphs. They are an integral part of the character of the village and should be protected from development.
- 5.11 The **Millennium Green**, to the west of the village, was acquired by the Millennium Green Trust to commemorate the Millennium Year 2000. In its short existence, it has become a valued recreational facility and is popular with local residents. Adjacent to it, and to the east of the Evesham Road, is the **Earl’s Lane Wood and Orchard**. The former is a new wood, donated as open land by 6 villagers in 2000 and planted up by volunteers under the auspices of the Wood Land Trust. It is owned and maintained by the Woodland Trust. Earl’s Lane Orchard is owned by the Vale Landscape Heritage Trust, and is an old traditional orchard of Apples and Plums. Both areas are supported and managed by local volunteers of the CPHT. Actively used by generations of children, the **First School Playing Field** is important for its recreational value. It is also a significant area of open space at the heart of the settlement, contributing much to its overall character.
- 5.12 On the northern edge of the village, there are clear remains of early agricultural activity in the form of ridge and furrow fields and linear field boundaries. Two areas are proposed as Local Green Space - **the fields behind the Main Street Frontage on Froglands Lane, and the Manor Grange and the adjacent Churchyard**. Both are important for their historical value, but they are also significant areas of open space. The latter includes an ancient field to the west of the Manor, as well as the

Churchyard; together these form a series of linked spaces within the Conservation Area.

- 5.13 To the west end of the village, off the Evesham Road, there is the **Land Belonging to the Cleeve Prior Heritage Trust**. This area, which includes the Field Barn Heritage Centre, is well-used by the public for educational and leisure purposes. It also forms an important green gateway to the village.
- 5.14 The western boundary of the parish is largely described by the River Avon and the Cleeve Prior Ridge. Access to the river is via Mill Lane, which leads to the **Village Wharf**. Until the advent of the Second World War, this was at a crossing point on the river, and the focus of recreational activity. It is now important as a green space, rich in wild life, in a quiet riverside setting.
- 5.15 In every respect the centre of the community, the **Village Green** is the most significant area of open space in Cleeve Prior. It is a relic of a much larger area of common land which ran through the village, but remains as a focus for assembly, both on the green and in the adjacent War Memorial Village Hall.
- 5.16 Beyond the village core, the parish contains a number of locally-significant heritage assets and historic landscape features. These have been documented in the landscape sensitivity analyses produced by Worcestershire County Council and are worthy of protection for their contribution to the landscape character of the parish.

Policy CP3

Significant areas of open space in the village and the parish are designated as Local Green Space and will be protected from development, except in very special circumstances. The following areas are identified on the Proposals Map:

- **Millennium Green and Earl's Lane Wood and Orchard**
- **The First School Playing Field**
- **Fields behind the Main Street Frontage on Froglands Lane**
- **Land Belonging to the Cleeve Prior Heritage Trust**
- **The Manor and the Adjacent Churchyard**
- **Village Wharf**
- **Village Greens**

Across the parish, proposals will only be permitted where they protect, and where possible, enhance historic woodlands and trees, hedgerows, key landscape features, and biodiversity.

Green Infrastructure

- 5.17 The South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) seeks (in Policy SWDP5) to establish a network of green infrastructure, in accordance with the Worcestershire Green Infrastructure Strategy. This is coupled to the policy guidance on Landscape Character Areas, which are identified in the SWDP. Development proposals adversely affecting green infrastructure in Character Areas shown as “protect and enhance” or “protect and restore” will generally not be permitted. The bulk of Cleeve Prior is located in Landscape Character Area 5, the Lenches Ridge, which is in the former category. The eastern part of the parish, however, is within Landscape Character Area 17, the Broadway and Cotswold Corridor, which is for “protect and restore.”
- 5.18 The green infrastructure policy is complemented by the general aim of the SWDP to protect and enhance the landscape, which is detailed in Policy SWDP25. The use of the Landscape Character Assessment, published by the County Council, is an important function of this policy. The Neighbourhood Plan supports these principles.
- 5.19 In Cleeve Prior, built development in the parish is concentrated around the village core, although there is a separate area to the south west, off the Evesham Road. Here the bulk of the developed area consists of the Gypsy Site, the future of which is considered below (see paragraphs 5.46 – 5.55). Adjoining the Gypsy Site to the north, there is an area of open land which was compulsorily purchased by the Parish Council (“the CPO land”) and remains in its ownership.
- 5.20 Between the CPO land and the edge of the village, south of Mill Lane, are two open fields. Altogether these areas form an important landscape buffer between the village core and the Gypsy Site. The Parish Council considers that this area should be protected from development.

Policy CP4

A landscape buffer zone will be maintained between the south western edge of Cleeve Prior village and the current Gypsy Site on the Evesham Road, as shown on the Proposals Map.

Biodiversity

5.21 The parish, with its attractive rural landscape, has a wide range of flora and fauna. Although there are no sites of UK or European importance, there is a need to protect significant wildlife species and habitats, as stated in the NPPF (paragraph 117). In particular, there are areas in the parish containing ancient hedgerows, traditional orchards, and deciduous woodlands which are recognised as habitats and species of principal importance in England. In accordance with the Biodiversity Action Plans for the UK and Worcestershire, and the South Worcestershire Development Plan (Policy SWDP22), this plan seeks to protect species and habitats in the parish. Certain sites have been identified, in consultation with the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust.

Policy CP5

In line with the NPPF, the local habitats and species of principal importance in England will be protected, particularly ancient hedgerows, traditional orchards and deciduous woodlands.

In accordance with the Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan, the following Local Wildlife Sites will be protected, as shown on the Proposals Map:

- **Cleeve Prior Bank:**
- **River Avon:**
- **Littleton, Broadway, and Badsey Brooks (part within Cleeve Prior Parish).**

In addition, natural ponds at the following locations will be protected and managed for their wildlife and historic landscape value:

- **Millennium Green;**
- **Field Barn Trust site;**
- **Froglands Lane:**
- **The Manor Grounds**
- **Area to the west of St. Andrew's Church**

Soils and Agricultural Land

5.22 The NPPF (paragraph 112) states that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Most of Cleeve Prior Parish consists of agricultural land, and there are a number of working farms and horticultural units. Farming is an extremely important part of the local economy and is supported by the South Worcestershire Development Plan, which seeks to achieve the most effective use of land as a resource (Policy SWDP13). Soil itself is identified as a strategic asset. In Cleeve Prior, the bulk of the agricultural land area is within ALC Grade 3, although there is a small expanse of Grade 2. Nevertheless, land should be protected from development in the interests of local farming infrastructure and its viability.

Protection from Pollution

5.23 Some concern was raised during consultation about the effects of development on environmental pollution. This is covered by the NPPF (paragraphs 123 – 125) and the South Worcestershire Development Plan (Policy SWDP31). Particular reference was made by respondents to the effects of light pollution in rural areas such as Cleeve Prior. Detailed guidance on this aspect is given in Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014).

Housing and Development Policies

Housing Land Supply

5.24 During consultation with the community, the primary focus of the debate was on housing. This is a major local issue. Its importance was highlighted at the South Worcestershire Development Plan Examination in October 2013, when the Inspector pronounced that the amount of housing land proposed in the submitted South Worcestershire Development Plan was inadequate. He asked the South Worcestershire Councils to re-calculate and increase the total, and to re-submit them. At the reconvened Stage 1 Examination in March 2014, the Inspector delivered his objectively assessed housing needs supply of 28,370 dwellings. The Stage 2 of the Examination, covering site specific matters and development management policies, is expected to resume in March 2015. At present, the South Worcestershire Development Plan does not include an allocation for Cleeve Prior.

- 5.25 In the meantime, it has become clear that, in the absence of an adopted plan, planning applications for housing are being assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development has resulted in an upsurge of planning permissions in the county, amid mounting pressure from housing developers.
- 5.26 During the preparation of the South Worcestershire Development Plan, a number of sites were assessed in and around Cleeve Prior as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Although the settlement has been designated as a category 3 village for the purposes of policy SWDP3, all of the sites suggested through the SHLAA were rejected for various reasons. Thus, Cleeve Prior has no specific allocation under Policy SWDP60, but it is accepted that some development will be required for local needs during the plan period.
- 5.27 Both the NPPF and the South Worcestershire Development Plan (Policy SWDP2) contain a presumption against development in the open countryside. Nevertheless, Cleeve Prior is an attractive village, and there has been interest from housing developers on a number of sites. At the time of writing, there are extant planning permissions for two and six dwellings respectively. In June 2014, Wychavon District Council refused outline planning permission for 20 dwellings on a site off Froglands Lane, with the developers appealing the decision in October 2014. There is also considerable speculation on the future of the Gypsy and Traveller Site off the Evesham Road (see below at paragraphs 5.46 – 5.55).
- 5.28 All of these recent activities have caused a considerable level of concern in the local community about the cumulative effects that these types of speculative development could have on the character of the village and the viability of the local community. These tensions are picked up in the South Worcestershire Development Plan and Policy SWDP2, which states that the scale of developments must be proportionate to the scale and needs of the settlement. In these circumstances, the Cleeve Prior Plan seeks to regulate the rate of housing growth so as to mitigate the effects of development on the character of the village. This is in accordance with Policy SWDP61, which supports the role of Neighbourhood Plans in detailing housing policies and local initiatives which are supported by local communities. Nevertheless, the effect on the character of the village must be weighed against the local needs for affordable housing.

Housing Needs

- 5.29 The Parish Council has given careful consideration to the issue of housing needs. It was evident from the consultations on this plan and from earlier surveys (e.g. on the Parish Plan) that there were some specific requirements for housing which is affordable. In the draft South Worcestershire Development Plan, policy SWDP15

addresses this topic. In particular, in sites outside towns, the policy states that developers will need to demonstrate that affordable housing units will remain permanently affordable and available. There is also provision, in Policy SWDP16, for rural exceptions sites.

- 5.30 Information received from Wychavon District Council under the Housing Lettings Scheme provided an initial indication of the level of local needs in Cleeve Prior. In October 2013, the scheme showed that there were six households on the list who have a local connection to the parish of Cleeve Prior or an adjacent parish, and have a preference to live there. As a result, the District Council considered that there was a low to medium need for additional affordable housing in the parish. This seemed to confirm the public view that a low rate of development is appropriate for the future.
- 5.31 In order to gain a more accurate picture of the range of housing needs, the Parish Council commissioned a more detailed housing needs survey in Cleeve Prior in the autumn of 2014. The survey was carried out in December 2014 by Data Orchard CIC via a questionnaire which was posed to every household in the parish. A total of 282 households were contacted, with a return of 104 completed questionnaires (37%).
- 5.32 The published Housing Needs Survey Report showed that there was a current need for nine additional homes in the parish over the next five years. Most of the needs seemed to be derived from family requirements, with a preference for two and three bedroom properties. In summary, the survey reinforces the Wychavon District Council view on the level of need for additional affordable housing.
- 5.33 It is intended that similar surveys will be organised in the future so as to monitor future changes and to determine whether a change in the policies may be necessary. It will be important to ensure that the types and the mix of dwellings provided are appropriate for the needs of future generations. Like most rural communities, Cleeve Prior has an ageing population, and consideration must be given to the accommodation requirements of the elderly. Information from the consultation responses and the Housing Needs Survey indicates that future housing schemes should be small in size and scale. It is therefore suggested that no more than five dwellings should be permitted on any particular site. It is recognised that larger rural exceptions schemes, of ten or more dwellings, may attract Section 106 planning obligations, according to Planning Practice Guidance.

Policy CP6

Proposals for small-scale housing schemes, which are affordable and provide for assessed local needs, will be permitted, subject to other policies in this plan. New developments of more than ten dwellings will be expected to make a contribution

towards the costs of affordable housing, for example by means of a Section 106 planning obligation.

Policy CP7

There will be a mix of housing types and tenures which reflect current and future local housing needs and housing market assessments.

Design of Housing and Development

5.34 The South Worcestershire Development Plan recognises the importance of design quality which helps to protect and enhance local environments. Detailed criteria are set out in Policy SWDP21. Design quality was also raised as a major issue for Cleeve Prior during community consultation. Much of the village's character stems from its historic buildings and the extensive use of local materials in construction, particularly the characteristic blue lias stone. An example of sympathetic design in new building is the incorporation of a blue lias plinth in the modern development at Bay Tree Farm Cottages, off Mill Lane. This type of initiative is to be encouraged.

5.35 As explained in the Conservation Area Appraisal, much of the village character stems from the low density of development, compared to the average density in Wychavon as a whole. Village gardens and the spaces between buildings are key elements of the built environment and need to be protected. The following policy seeks to protect and enhance the special features of the village and its vernacular, as well as the historic and archaeological assets of the parish as a whole.

Policy CP8

The scale and design of new development will reflect the character of the village and the Conservation Area. In particular, the following guidelines will apply:

- **All new development should clearly demonstrate a contextually responsive design solution**
- **Building materials should be in harmony with the existing properties; wherever appropriate, the use of blue lias stone should be deployed and incorporated into the architectural details of new developments**
- **New buildings should respect neighbouring roof profiles and pitches, the characteristic spacing between buildings, the historic building line, and the overall density of development in the village**
- **Detailing should be in line with traditional design features**

- **Infilling development should not obscure key public views of the surrounding countryside nor should it significantly reduce gardens which are essential to the settings of existing residences**
- **Redevelopment, alteration, or extension of historic farmsteads and agricultural buildings within Cleeve Prior parish should be sensitive to their distinctive character, materials, and form. Due reference should be made in decision-making to the Worcestershire Farmstead Assessment Guidance**
- **New development must take account of known surface and sub-surface archaeology, and ensure that unknown and potentially significant deposits are identified and appropriately considered during development. Lack of current evidence of sub-surface archaeology must not be taken as proof of its absence.**

5.36 The South Worcestershire Development Plan includes policies on sustainable design, which can help to achieve energy efficiency and to mitigate the effects of climate change (see Policy SWDP21). Government policy, as set out in the Climate Change Act 2008, seeks to achieve higher standards of construction through the application of amendments to the Building Regulations. Derived from the Act, there are specified targets for achieving “zero carbon” development. From 2016, all new housing developments should be carbon neutral. Similar targets for commercial development will apply from 2019. These national intentions are amplified in Policy SWDP27, which is concerned with renewable and low carbon energy provision. It is intended that these standards should be applied to Cleeve Prior.

Policy CP9

New dwellings will be constructed to high standards of sustainability, to a minimum of BREEAM Level 4. All buildings, wherever possible, will be constructed to the highest standards of energy efficiency. New developments should incorporate the use of renewable energy technologies and other low energy systems in order to reduce carbon emissions.

Employment Policies

5.37 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local and neighbourhood plans should promote a strong rural economy. In addition, a leading objective of the South Worcestershire Development Plan is “Economic Success for All”. The Economic Vision and Economic Strategy for the area include support for the rural economy, including agricultural and horticultural businesses. This is underpinned by

Policy SWDP12, which seeks to promote new employment opportunities, subject to criteria on scale and form.

5.38 Traditionally, the economy of Cleeve Prior has been based on farming and horticulture. Although employment in these activities has declined substantially, their overall importance has not diminished. The continuance of farming in the area has also been a key element in the conservation of the local landscape and the countryside setting of the village. Equestrian activities are also a feature of the rural economy, and should be encouraged, provided that developments are sympathetic to the character of the area. Where menages are required, they should not be floodlit, and should be of a scale appropriate to their setting.

5.39 The South Worcestershire Development Plan, Policy SWDP19, also supports dwellings for rural workers. There is concern that some other villages in the county have suffered from the influx of inappropriate development, which is out of scale and character. It is recognised that there should be a presumption in favour of rural economic development, but it is considered that this should be appropriate to the character of the village, in accordance with SWDP12. It is recognised that Cleeve Prior has an ageing population; consideration should be given to local employment associated with the care of the elderly.

Policy CP10

New businesses and employment will be permitted, provided that new or expanded businesses are of a scale and type appropriate to the rural setting of Cleeve Prior and its Conservation Area. The following criteria will be applied:

- **the proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on the amenity of the occupiers of neighbouring properties, and;**
- **the site is capable of accommodating the proposed development along with the necessary parking and servicing arrangements.**

5.40 Farming and horticulture will continue to be the cornerstones of the local economy, as recognised in the South Worcestershire Development Plan. It is recognised, however, that there needs to be continuing support for these elements, including farm diversification. As stated above (paragraph 5.39), the NPPF is explicit in its support for economic growth in rural areas and seeks to promote the development

and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses. This is also set out in Policy SWDP12.

Communications

5.41 The village community and local businesses have benefited considerably from the advent of the internet and the development of information technology. There is evidence of a marked increase in home-based working, which is also encouraged by Policy SWDP12. Clearly, more home-based working reduces the overall need to travel, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

5.42 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) gives positive support for the development of high quality communications infrastructure. This is reflected in the South Worcestershire Development Plan, which also promotes the continued development of telecommunications and broadband connections (SWDP Policy 26). In Cleeve Prior, compared to certain other areas in the county, there have been some problems with the installation of high-speed broad band connections. It is anticipated that the provision of high speed fibre optic cable networks may resolve current problems in 2015. This plan supports the continuing improvements to telecommunications and information technology for the village, which will assist local businesses and home-based working.

Education

5.43 During the public consultations on the plan, there was considerable public concern about the future of the First School. It is acknowledged that this will depend to a large extent on the future demography of the village and the adjacent parish of Bickmarsh, which lies within the school catchment area. Nevertheless, both the Church of England and the County Council have pledged their support for the school.

5.44 The Parish Council is also supportive of the school, which is a key village asset. Consideration of the school and associated facilities, including pre-school and nursery education, is set out in Annex 1 to this document.

Infrastructure

5.45 A number of concerns were also raised in consultations about village infrastructure, particularly transport. For its size, Cleeve Prior has an impressive range of facilities and services. Residents were clearly concerned to maintain and improve transport,

and the range of services and facilities. Having considered these views, the Parish Council has concluded that the aspirations of the community, which it shares, are outside the scope of the land use policies in this plan. Infrastructure is therefore dealt with in detail in Annex 1 to this plan, together with a consideration of Community Infrastructure Levy and other possible funding mechanisms.

Gypsy and Traveller Site

- 5.46 During the consultation on the issues and options for the plan, there was considerable debate about the future of the gypsy and traveller site, off the Evesham Road. As shown on the Proposals Map, the area consists partly of a county site of eight pitches which occupies private land under lease to Worcestershire County Council, which expires in 2016. The larger part of the site, on surrounding land, contains 19 private pitches. The total site area is approximately 6.5 hectares, but it is under-occupied. According to Wychavon District Council returns, in January 2015, eleven of the private plots were occupied, with 31 caravans. There is no doubt that the condition of the site as a whole has deteriorated in recent years and it is currently in a very poor state. It is in need of restoration and management. Annex 1 of this plan deals with management aspects of the site.
- 5.47 Government policy on these issues is contained in Planning Policy for Traveller sites, published in March 2012. The document requires local planning authorities to set pitch targets for travellers and plot targets for travelling show people that address the permanent and transit site accommodation needs of travellers in their area. Local planning authorities should also set out criteria to provide a basis for the allocation of sites and identify sufficient deliverable sites to provide a five-year supply when measured against locally-set targets.
- 5.48 To reflect the above requirements, the Worcestershire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) report was published in November 2014. For Wychavon, the document indicated a need for nine permanent traveller pitches for the period 2014/15 to 2018/19. The GTAA also provides the basis for proposed changes to policy SWDP17 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan. Thus, Wychavon District Council will identify and update annually the five-year supply, set against local targets. The proposed SWDP policy also states that the local planning authority will assess the suitability of proposals and planning applications (including the intensification or reasonable expansion of existing traveller sites) against set criteria. Applications that perform well against the criteria will be considered favourably.

- 5.49 The proposed changes to policy SWDP17 will be considered at the resumed examination in the spring of 2015. In the meantime, Wychavon District Council has announced its intention to produce a Travellers and Travelling Show People Development Plan Document (DPD); however, this will follow the formal adoption of the SWDP.
- 5.50 Both the GTAA and the proposed changes to policy SWDP 17 provide the current planning context for the consideration of the Evesham Road site and its future. The site is in a sensitive location in the open countryside and any proposals for intensification or for alternative uses may not satisfy some of the proposed criteria listed in the SWDP. First and foremost, it is not on the edge of an existing settlement and is therefore in the open countryside. At the same time, the impact of any development on the character and integrity of the village needs to be minimised.
- 5.51 All of these factors need to be assessed against the level of requirement for pitches in Wychavon as a whole. To summarise the position, there is a great deal of uncertainty about the future of the Evesham Road site. At the time of drafting this plan, it is unclear whether Wychavon District Council would wish to retain any gypsy and traveller pitches on the site.
- 5.52 The Parish Council have given careful consideration to these issues. Should the whole or part of the site become surplus to requirements, alternative uses may be considered provided that they are appropriate to a rural area in terms of the scale, design, and character. Both the SWDP and the NPPF state that proposals for development should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the open countryside. The NPPF also permits neighbourhood plans to take a positive approach to sustainable development if it helps to support economic development in rural areas.
- 5.53 In these circumstances, any future use of the site must await the outcome of the Wychavon District Council DPD (see 5.49 above), which will include a detailed study of future needs. Should the site not be required, suitable changes of use might include a craft and visitor centre, or small business units. Some limited housing development might be acceptable if it would help to enhance and maintain the vitality of the village and support the provision of services and facilities. Nevertheless, its location beyond the edge of the village means that development should not be overly domineering in terms of its size and scale. A large housing estate would clearly be inappropriate, but a mixed use scheme might be acceptable, which provides for locally-assessed needs.

5.54 Whatever the outcome, the long term aim is to develop and manage the site in a sensitive manner and to ensure that it achieves sustainable development appropriate for a rural setting. Resolving the future of the site is critical in providing certainty for the future of the village as a whole. Any proposals for the site will be subject to full consultation with the local community. An interim policy (CP11) is set out below, to provide a context for the future planning of the area. This reflects the sensitivity of the site, and the fact that its long term use has not yet been established by the local planning authority.

Policy CP11

Should the land to the west of the Evesham Road, as shown on the proposals map, be no longer required as a site for gypsies and travellers, alternative uses may be considered, provided that development is:

- **a use appropriate to a rural area, such as agricultural and land-based businesses, tourism or leisure, or local services and community facilities;**
- **of a high quality design with appropriate landscaping that recognises the character and attractiveness of the surrounding countryside;**
- **consistent with the aim of providing for locally- assessed housing needs in accordance with Policy CP7;**
- **of a size, scale, and density that is in keeping with the village of Cleeve Prior and does not overly dominate the main settlement;**
- **has safe and suitable access with adequate vehicle parking, and;**
- **of a type which supports the provision and enhancement of services and facilities for the parish.**

5.55 As described in paragraph 6.2 below, consideration will be given to the setting up of a Community Land Trust to oversee the management of land in the parish for the benefit of the local community. It is anticipated that the Trust would take an active involvement in the future development of the gypsy and traveller site, in line with the criteria set out in Policy CP11.

6. Implementation

6.1 To be effective, The Neighbourhood Plan must be deliverable. The policies and proposals in this plan have been assessed as to whether they are realistic and can be implemented during the plan period to the year 2030 and beyond. It is recognised that the Parish Council has limited resources and that many of the policies will be delivered by other agencies.

- 6.2 To assist in the delivery of the plan, consideration will be given to a Community Land Trust (CLT) for Cleeve Prior. Membership would be open to all those who live and work in the parish. Its purpose would be to sustain and enhance the village community. The CLT could undertake small-scale developments of affordable housing spread throughout the plan period. As indicated above (see paragraph 5.50), the CLT could also be partner to a developer in a scheme to regenerate the gypsy and traveller site to the west of the Evesham Road.

ANNEX 1: Non-Land Use Issues

- A1. As explained in Section 1 of this document, a Neighbourhood Plan must address the use and development of land. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that *wider community aspirations than those relating to development and use of land can be included in a neighbourhood plan, but actions dealing with non-land use matters should be clearly identifiable.*” This is the purpose of this annex, which picks up on the wider concerns and aspirations of villagers expressed in the consultation processes. It is arranged mainly in terms of the principal topics raised by the community – firstly with education, then with infrastructure.

Education

- A2. In the consultations with the local community, the importance of the Cleeve Prior Church of England Endowed First School as a key community asset was stressed. According to Worcestershire County Council, the school has space for 90 children, but in October 2014, only 49 pupils were on the school roll. With these figures in mind, there has been some concern locally about the future viability of the establishment. To a large extent, this will depend on having a healthy number of children in Cleeve Prior and in the adjacent parish of Bickmarsh. The County Council have advised that the likely pupil yield from the existing numbers of households is below average. Thus, there is a critical relationship between the future numbers and types of new properties likely to appeal to families with young children.
- A3. In terms of the existing school facilities, there has been a continuing need to use temporary buildings at the site, and new permanent facilities will need to be provided for the future. The Church of England has pledged its continuing support for the First School, but its long term future will depend very much on the emerging development policy for the village. The Parish Council will also continue to support the school and its future viability as a key village asset. It is hoped that the temporary building currently used as part of the school premises will be replaced by a permanent structure, but this will depend on the availability of funds.
- A4. A number of respondents to the consultations about the plan have emphasised a need for pre-school and nursery education facilities in the village. The County Council

have also stressed the need for a school to have good links with pre-school provision. At present the setting for pre-school education is provided in the War Memorial Village Hall, which is not satisfactory. It is considered that a new permanent building should be provided for pre-school and nursery education. This would act as a feeder to the First School and help to support it in the future. It could also be used for adult education and other peripatetic activities. Again, its delivery is dependent on the availability of finance.

Infrastructure

- A5. Considerable concern was raised in consultations about village infrastructure and the need for future improvements. Transport emerged as a key issue. The main village thoroughfare, Main Street, sits astride the B4085, which runs from Bidford on Avon to Evesham. Although this is not a primary route, there is a high volume of traffic, especially at peak hours. There have been a number of related issues, not only with the amount of traffic, but also with its speed, especially on Main Street. Some additional speed warnings and control measures have been introduced on the Evesham Road, but with little overall effect. It is considered that additional measures are required, especially on the principal length of Main Street, in the heart of the Conservation Area. It has been suggested in consultation that an overall scheme of traffic management is required, but this would be difficult to deliver in the current economic climate,
- A6. In the short term therefore, the Parish Council consider that the most effective measure would be to extend and widen the footway on the north side of Main Street alongside the War Memorial Hall. This would have two benefits. First, it would improve mobility and access for wheelchair users and children's pushchairs. Second, it would have the effect of slowing down traffic by the creation of a one-way "gateway" in the centre of the village. The Parish Council is keen to develop this proposal and will be holding talks with Worcestershire County Council Highways Department.
- A7. Car usage in the parish is high, mainly because of the comparative remoteness of the village from the nearest urban centres. Conversely, public transport usage is very low. On weekdays, there is an hourly bus service each way between Stratford upon Avon and Evesham, but this is poorly used. It is a vital facility, however, for students at secondary schools and colleges and for non-car users, especially the elderly. The nearest railway stations are at Honeybourne and Evesham.
- A8. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to promote sustainable forms of transport, so as to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to give people a choice about how they travel. This is echoed by the South Worcestershire Development Plan (Policy SWDP19), which seeks to promote more transport choice in rural areas.

It is considered that there should be a flexible approach to transport provision in Cleeve Prior, so as to reduce the use of the private car and improve overall accessibility. The Parish Council endorses this approach and will support the provision of public and community transport facilities.

- A9. The village and the surrounding parish are well-endowed with a network of footpaths and bridleways. These are in varying states of repair and maintenance, and there is a need both to improve standards and to make better connections. Although there are quite high numbers of journeys on foot, these could be increased by comparatively small levels of investment. In particular, the footpath connection in the area of the Millennium Green, between the Evesham Road and the First School, could be enhanced, thus encouraging parents and children to walk and cycle to and from the school.
- A10. The Parish Council will work with the County Council for the continued improvement and usage of the network of footpaths and bridleways in and around Cleeve Prior. The provision of better facilities for cycling will also be encouraged. In the short term, the Parish Council may consider the possibility of providing an all-weather footpath and cycleway at the Millennium Green. This would be particularly beneficial for pedestrians, as it would provide a safe route from the Evesham Road to the vicinity of the First School.
- A11. Both the NPPF and the SWDP (Policy SWDP28) contain policies for development management and flood risk. Despite its proximity to the River Avon, Cleeve Prior parish lies substantially within Flood Zone 3, and has not been affected by the major flooding incidents in Worcestershire in recent years. Nevertheless, there have been localised problems arising, because of the limited capacity of surface water drains to cope with increased volumes of rainfall. Problems have been concentrated particularly at the north end of the village, between The Manor and the B4085 road. A number of concerns were raised about these issues during consultations. The Parish Council will work with Severn Trent Water to discuss improvements to the network of surface drains in Cleeve Prior. The aim is to introduce measures which will reduce the amount of surface water run-off during periods of heavy rainfall.
- A12. For a small settlement, Cleeve Prior has a good range of village services and facilities, which are clearly valued by local residents. Facilities include the First School (see above), the War Memorial Village Hall, the Kings Arms public house, the Farm Shop, and the Field Barn Conservation Centre. Rural facilities generally are supported by the South Worcestershire Development Plan, including village shops (Policy

SWDP22). There is a lively and active community in Cleeve Prior, but its continued strength and viability depends very much on financial and voluntary support for the maintenance and management of facilities and the services to which they are linked. The Parish Council will support proposals for the improvement of existing services and facilities, together with the introduction of new measures, provided they do not cause significant harm to the amenity of local residents. The loss of essential village services and facilities will be resisted and the provision of additional facilities will be encouraged, particularly for younger members of the community.

- A13. Although Cleeve Prior is an attractive village, it is not noted as a destination for tourists or day visitors, compared to many villages in the county and in adjacent areas of Warwickshire. The Parish Council consider that there is some potential for developing facilities for visitors, provided that it is appropriate to the scale and character of the village. This would have some benefits for the local economy, and would help to support the maintenance of local heritage assets and infrastructure, in accordance with SWDP Policy 34.
- A14. In particular, there would appear to be some potential for the upgrading of the Village Wharf area, so as to enhance recreational opportunities both for local people and visitors. Possible improvements could include the restoration of mooring facilities, a launching area for canoes and small boats, and a picnic area, with better access to the River Avon. The Parish Council will discuss these ideas with the Heart of England Tourist Board, the District Council, the Environment Agency and other stakeholders.
- A15. Planning agreements have been an important component of the planning system for many years, whereby developers, on receiving planning permission, undertake to provide certain facilities so as to off-set the potentially harmful effects of a proposed development. Currently, such obligations are covered by Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Most of these agreements will be replaced by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), which comes into force on the adoption of a Local Plan for an area. In accordance with SWDP Policy 7, the joint authorities intend to adopt co-ordinated Community Infrastructure Levies. In Wychavon District, CIL will thus be effective when the South Worcestershire Development Plan has been fully adopted.
- A16. Under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and the CIL Regulations, 25% of CIL receipts generated from a development in a town or parish covered by a Neighbourhood Plan may be used by a town or parish council for the benefit of the local community. This could be a significant benefit for parish councils in rural areas, including Cleeve Prior. The Parish Council will keep these possibilities under review,

together with other potential sources of income to deliver both the land use policies of this plan, together with the aspirational proposals set out in this annex.

DRAFT as at 1st May 2015