
Thank you for the opportunity to speak today as chair of the Clifton upon Dunsmore Parish Council and on behalf of the residents of Clifton.

The Parish Councils views reflect an extensive engagement with our community. It is important to stress at the outset that there is **strong and widespread local opposition** to this proposal.

We want to be clear — we are not opposed to proportionally scaled, sympathetic development supported by the appropriate infrastructure.

However, our original parish has already accommodated **substantial housing growth in recent years** with circa 3,000 houses in the 90's with the loss of the developed Strawberry Fields site at Brownsover from the parish ... and now a further 6,200 new houses being built in Houlton within the current Parish **highly likely to be lost from the Parish...** this is over 9,000 houses in total. There is a feeling in the community that “we have done our bit”.

Our Parish Neighbourhood Plan, having passed examination, is going to referendum on 7th May. This application does not fall under any “defined as suitable” development within our emerging Neighbourhood Plan and we feel that our housing growth obligations are more than met by the sites allocated within the emergent RBC Local Plan. The community feels that this proposal is fundamentally **the wrong development, in the wrong place, at the wrong scale,** and we know it is the forerunner of a much larger proposal for a strategic scale of unplanned development.

The village of Clifton upon Dunsmore is recognised by RBC as a “characteristic hilltop settlement” 120 metres above sea level it dates back to Roman times. It is named proudly as Clifton “upon” (**don't ever say “on”!!**)... UPON a “Dunsmore” - Anglo-Saxon in origin combining the Old English Dunn { hill } and mōr { heath } a landscape characterization found exclusively around Rugby and Coventry. This application plans to build **on the hillside/plateau** fringe of our “Dunsmore” and does not contribute to **any characterisation** of the village as a hilltop settlement.

Clifton Village is primarily a low-density residential development and a dormitory/commuter settlement with a strong cohesive local village community. Clifton Village remains modest in scale with circa 550 homes comprising traditional village streets and is considered of sufficient character and merit to have a conservation area at its heart.

This proposed development would:

- Urbanise open hillside fringe countryside, reducing our separation from the Rugby conurbation adversely affecting our identity as a village community.
- Create a detached development, which does not relate well to the village. Effectively creating a sub-community neither in Clifton nor in Rugby.
- The 160 houses put a significantly strain on weak local infrastructure and will do nothing to elevate current deficiencies in sustainability.
- Would cause significant and irreversible harm to landscape character by building on Best and Most Versatile grade 2 agricultural land.

I would like to lay out our objections further in six categories :

1. Planning principles and policy.

2. Scale and cumulative impact

3. Infrastructure and services

4. Sustainability.

5. Highways and safety

6. Landscape and environment.

Firstly, in terms of **planning principles and policy**.

This application seeks outline permission for up to 160 houses on land which is outside the defined settlement boundary, in open countryside.

We understand that under the current and emerging Rugby Local Plan, development in a main rural settlement such as Clifton should be located within the existing boundary or on allocated sites. **This site is neither.**

Notably this site was considered through the call for sites for the new emerging RBC Local Plan. It was excluded... considered as not best suited for development. It is therefore not part of the emerging new Local Plan (2041) which allocates 150 houses to the village in central locations, adjacent to the hilltop – upon the Dunsmore.

The emerging new local plan also recognises and sets clear policy to highlight the importance of maintaining areas of separation, to clearly delineate specific communities. The area of separation policy proposal is overwhelmingly supported by the residents of Clifton Village. A recent poll was conducted by the Parish Council where 55% (505 respondents) of the Clifton village electorate voted it showed **that 98% agreed with this policy**. This proposed site is within this area of separation.

We also recognise that the National Planning Policy Framework states that decisions should be **plan-led unless** exceptional circumstances apply. With the emerging RBC Local Plan site allocations within Clifton and the area of separation policy, we believe that no such exceptional circumstance has been demonstrated.

We understand that approval of this application would therefore be **contrary to policy** and would set a **dangerous precedent** for speculative, non-planned development across the entire Borough.

We already have a further 180 houses seeking planning approval close to the conservation area!

Secondly, on **scale and cumulative impact**.

This application for these 160 houses represents around a 30% increase in village size which is highly significant and represents a weighty impact on our small rural settlement, as it stands.

However, we would like to bring to the attention of this inquiry that this proposal is not standalone. The developers have been clear with the Parish Council and Parishioners, who are dismayed, that this represents Phase 1 of a wider scheme of development right across the back of Clifton towards Houlton just up the hill parallel to Houlton Way.

This would ultimately deliver up to 700 houses - a momentous impact on RBCs housing targets, infrastructure, and spatial strategy. This would increase our Village settlement by circa 130%.

Agreement to this current scheme inevitably risks opening the door to these further phases which would effectively wipe a historical Clifton Village off the map as a cohesive community as we become a suburb, of either Houlton or Rugby ... or both?

Thirdly, **infrastructure and services**.

Our village infrastructure is already under considerable strain. The existing RBC Local Plan paragraph 3.11 says... ‘Main Rural Settlements need to have a sufficient level of services, or access to services to allow for development within the existing settlement boundaries’.

Rugby Borough Council used a Rural Sustainability Study (updated December 2024) to assess and rank our villages based on their access to services, facilities, public transport, and the internet. This study informed the new Local Plan to direct development toward more sustainable locations away from our village. It gave Clifton a sustainability score ranking it equal 6th out the 9 main Rugby settlements surveyed.

The village centre has a pub, small general shop, a beautician, and a small therapy treatment business.

The primary school is effectively full drawing from the Rugby North Central Primary School Place Planning Area. It has no realistic capacity to expand and no school green space/playing field of its own. UK Gov statistics say the school capacity is 226 with 224 pupils currently enrolled and is shown to have significantly more demand for places than it can accommodate now.

Bearing in mind that the school is single form of entry school. Care is needed to avoid tipping the balance and creating the need for children to be bussed out of our village, with the influx of new families, to attend other primary schools, adding to congestion.

The school itself is “landlocked” with no space to develop/expand further, having already used part of the playground/car park for additional classrooms. Access is difficult as it is on a busy and complex set of road junctions, exacerbated by poor parking during chaotic drop off and pick up times.

There is no secondary school in the village. Existing and new secondary pupils will need to be bussed or driven to school. Notably Houlton secondary school - currently within our parish has closed admissions from Clifton. North Rugby has a general serious deficit in secondary school provision, we know children from the area of north Rugby attend schools out of county, and this will not help that situation.

This development would also place **additional demand on already overstretched infrastructure**, and the application does not demonstrate how these impacts would be adequately mitigated. We feel this is contrary to RBC Local Plan Policy D3, which requires sufficient infrastructure to support new development.

Fourth, **sustainability**.

This is not a sustainable location for development or realistic active travel links

The site is remote from key services which require travel to access. Public transport is limited, with a single 80-90 min frequency bus service which does not operate in the evenings nor on Sundays.

Whilst much is made theoretically of walking and cycling, in reality there are no existing or proposed practical realistic alternatives:

- There are steep gradients in and out of Rugby and the village centre - I've made much of the fact we are on top of Dunsmore which makes cycling and walking a chosen activity for the already fit and active and excludes many with young children or incapacitated/elderly residents from doing the same.
- There is no dedicated cycling infrastructure in or around Clifton with dangerous pinch points such as on Rugby Road at the railway bridge which brings traffic, cyclists and pedestrians together in close proximity. Personally, I've seen accidents where cyclist have been forced off their bikes at this location.
- The footpaths directly in/out of the village only go to Rugby or Newton Village and involve crossing busy roads. i.e. Lilbourne and Hillmorton Roads have no footpaths. The footpaths where we do have them, we have are typically only on one side of the road.

Although the developer's submission suggests good access to amenities and non-car related active travel options, these are manifestly unrealistic and completely out of touch with reality. It's a fact that existing residents rely heavily on private cars for access to employment, education, healthcare, leisure, and shopping. In practice, future residents would also be **heavily reliant on private cars**, which conflicts directly with national and local sustainability objectives.

Fifth, highways and safety.

Traffic levels on Rugby Road are already extremely high, with over 6,000 vehicle movements per day on an unclassified road with peak flows of 660+ per hour recorded in a recent survey the Parish Council conducted (2 weeks from 20th Sept 2025 - Road Data Services Ltd) . The Road already has a 7.5 tonne weight restriction. We are surprised that according to 2024 data from the RAC Foundation, the average traffic flow on urban minor roads is about 2,100 vehicles per day so Rugby Rd appears to be 3X above average already without introducing more vehicles into the equation .

We understand from data that *Households in rural areas such as ours have a significantly higher rate of car ownership compared to the national average, with **61% of these households owning two or more cars/vans**** . This would presume that this development (Which we know to be phase 1) could add anywhere between 160 -250 additional vehicles into the our locale.

The proposed junction, and only vehicular access of said 240 cars to the development, adjacent to Newall close, would join the already terribly busy Rugby Road. This is on a bend, on a hill, close to the railway bridge. Traffic already backups past this point from the Butlers Leap - Houlton Way junction. Cars or service vehicles would not be able to easily leave/access the new houses at these congested times.

Rugby Road has a poor patched and potholed road surface with speed cushions forcing cyclists into the gutters to avoid traffic. The railway bridge on a bend down the hill and close to the proposed site junction, it narrows with extremely slender pavements bringing pedestrians, cyclists, and traffic close together. The continuation of the footpath down Rugby Rd towards Rugby only goes as far as the canal bridge, where it is then necessary to cross the road, on a bend, on the hill with no pedestrian crossing. There is then a separate very narrow pedestrian bridge to the side of the canal bridge 66 to cross the canal.

We understand that schemes have been muted to control traffic across the bridge with traffic lights. It should be noted the road is furtherer restricted just past the bridge with resident on road parking. Any proposed scheme would need to be very careful in its design and phasing with Butler Leaps junction and somehow accommodate for the needs of resident parking/ access requirements after introducing and further tidal flow to the traffic and the ever increasing in volume of traffic wanting to access the expanding Houlton.

The village centre is congested already, offroad parking on the main Church Road effectively makes it a single-track roadway out to Newton village, Brownsover and M6/A5.

We feel that this development would add significantly to that burden with the increase in cars and car journeys.

We understand that the original transport assessment was **incomplete and insufficient, as reflected by WCCs appraisal** even now there are many caveats, and the final scheme unclear and untested with real-world traffic scenarios .

At present we feel we have not seen it has fully presented and proven that the proposal would **not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety or that the residual cumulative effects on the wider road network would be not severe.**

***(Data sourced from NTS 2024 Household Car Availability, NimbleFins 2026 Analysis, and National Travel Survey 2021/2022 reports [10, 19, 23])**

Sixth, **landscape and environment.**

The site falls within the Dunsmore Landscape' Character Area (LCA) according to RBC's Landscape Character Assessment (published this year) as **Dunsmore Plateau Fringe** Landscape Type we know that the applicant acknowledges this.

There is a distinctive uninterrupted landscape in the proposed area of separation looking down the hill towards the Avon and Clifton brook valley which would be built on.

We understand that planning guidance says that Agricultural Land Classification helps guide planning decisions... In the application it's said that the site is used for "non-cereal crops". We know that in 2025 it was used for potatoes and in previous years it has been used for cereal crops and cultivating maze, so this is not the case.

It makes sense therefore that the land has been classified by RBC planners as Category 2 "Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, meaning we believe is that it is among the most versatile farmland. We understand that national policies seek to protect such land.

We realise therefore that planning policies are in place to protect it from inappropriate or unsustainable development and therefore assume that Natural England must be consulted before approving large-scale developments (especially regarding the larger scheme of up to 700 houses) , we are unsure as to whether this is the case?

We feel that the applicant has failed to demonstrate that there are no suitable alternative sites of lesser landscape or agricultural value, nor that the benefits of the scheme would clearly outweigh the harm arising from the permanent loss of such high-quality farmland. Such alternatives, however, are now proposed in the emerging RBC Local Plan(2041).

So finally...

When considered as a whole, this proposal is:

- Contrary to RBCs current and newly emerging Local plan and the emerging Clifton Neighbourhood plan and hence National Planning Policies,
- Unsustainable as a location, diminishing separation, offering little or no cohesion with the villages centre or its community.
- Further pressurising and damaging existing limited infrastructure and services
- Harmful to landscape, agriculture, and the environment,
- Offering transportation and traffic proposals which are unsupported by robust evidence or based on reality.

Any benefits this development may offer are clearly and significantly outweighed by these harms.

On behalf of Clifton Upon Dunsmore Parish Council, and the community we represent, we respectfully urge you to **refuse this application**.

Thank you for your time.