Salford Priors Parish Council

26/02478/FUL

Site: Land South of School Road, Salford Priors
Proposal: Erection of 99 dwellings, public open space, play facilities, landscaping, drainage infrastructure and associated works

Summary of Objection

Salford Priors Parish Council strongly objects to this application on the grounds of its adverse impact on the character and appearance of the village, its scale and density, harm to the setting of heritage assets and the Conservation Area, highway and pedestrian safety concerns, and conflict with local and national planning policy.

1. Scale and Density Are Inappropriate for the Rural Village Context

The proposal seeks 99 dwellings on a net developable area of approximately 2.8 hectares (within a 6.27 hectare site), at an average density of 35 dwellings per hectare. This represents a substantial urban extension to Salford Priors, a village that is not allocated for strategic housing growth. By comparison, the typical density in Salford Priors is between 8 and 20 dwellings per hectare, and Priors Crescent is 4.9 dwellings per hectare.

The Design and Access Statement acknowledges the need to reduce densities along the rural edge following pre-application discussions with Stratford-on-Avon District Council. Notwithstanding these amendments, the overall scale remains excessive and introduces a suburban form of development that does not reflect the established grain, density, spacing and character of the village. The scheme would also result in the permanent loss of agricultural land and extend built development significantly into open countryside beyond the established settlement pattern. The proposal appears driven by maximising dwelling numbers rather than responding to the site's rural context.

The proposal therefore conflicts with:

- Core Strategy Policy CS.9 (Design and Distinctiveness);
- Core Strategy Policy CS.15 (Distribution of Development);
- Core Strategy Policy AS.10 (Countryside and Villages);
- Development Requirements SPD Part B (Character and Local Distinctiveness);
- NPPF Section 12 and Policy DP3, which require development to respond positively to local character and context.

2. Harm to the Rural Setting and Landscape Character

The site is an open agricultural field that contributes to the transition between the built form of Salford Priors and the surrounding countryside. The applicant's own Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment concludes:

- Major adverse effects from Public Right of Way AL4 at Year 0;
- Moderate to major adverse effects remaining after 15 years;
- Minor to moderate adverse effects on local landscape character;
- Permanent change from agricultural land to residential development.

These conclusions demonstrate that the development cannot be regarded as a neutral or beneficial landscape intervention. The magnitude of change is substantial and would urbanise an important area of countryside on the edge of the village.

The proposal conflicts with:

- Core Strategy Policy CS.5 (Landscape);
- Core Strategy Policy CS.9 (Design and Distinctiveness);
- National Design Guide principles relating to Context and Nature;
- NPPF requirements to recognise and reinforce local distinctiveness and landscape character.

3. Loss of Agricultural Land and Countryside Encroachment

The Planning Statement confirms that the site consists entirely of agricultural land currently in productive use. The proposal would permanently urbanise 6.2 hectares of farmland and extend development into open countryside.

The site is not allocated for development. The applicant seeks to justify the proposal on sustainability grounds alone, and explicitly acknowledges that “Salford Priors is not identified as a housing allocation within the adopted development plan.” The site therefore represents an unallocated greenfield intrusion into the countryside.

The proposal conflicts with:

- Core Strategy Policy CS.5 (Landscape);
- Core Strategy Policy CS.15 (Distribution of Development);
- Core Strategy Policy AS.10 (Countryside and Villages);
- NPPF provisions protecting the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Impact on Local Businesses

The application also fails to address the conflict between the proposed residential development and two established local businesses, namely Angus Soft Fruits and the award-winning Orchard Farm School of Cookery. Both are rural enterprises that contribute to the local economy and depend on their agricultural setting. The application does not demonstrate how the introduction of 99 dwellings, and the associated traffic, activity and loss of farmland, would be reconciled with their continued operation.

The Parish Council requests that the applicant be required to assess the impact on these businesses and to demonstrate that they would not be prejudiced by the development.

4. Harm to the Setting of the Conservation Area and Heritage Assets

The Design and Access Statement confirms that the site lies approximately 35 metres from Salford Priors Conservation Area and acknowledges that the development would result in harm to:

- Salford Priors Conservation Area;
- Grade II Listed Orchard Farmhouse;
- Grade II Listed Orchard Barn;
- Grade I Listed Church of St Matthew;
- Grade II Listed Godiva Cottage.

The applicant's Heritage Assessment expressly concludes that the proposals would cause harm through change to setting. Although described as "less than substantial harm", such harm must still be afforded considerable importance and weight. The proposed 99-house estate would fundamentally alter the rural approach to the village and erode the agricultural setting that contributes to the significance of nearby heritage assets and the Conservation Area.

The proposal therefore conflicts with:

- Core Strategy Policy CS.8 (Historic Environment);
- Sections 16 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990;
- NPPF heritage policies requiring great weight to be given to the conservation of heritage assets.

5. Highway Safety and Pedestrian Conflict

The Parish Council is concerned at the reliance on the existing Orchard Farm access and the interaction between substantial additional vehicular traffic and pedestrian movements. Traffic associated with 99 dwellings would be introduced onto School Road and Orchard Drive, creating increased conflict points between:

- Vehicles entering and leaving the development;
- Existing residents;
- School children travelling to Salford Priors CE Academy;
- Pedestrians using School Road;
- Users of the Public Rights of Way network.

Although technical reports conclude that junction capacity is acceptable, capacity alone is not the sole test. In particular:

- Existing pedestrian movements will be required to interact with greatly increased traffic volumes.
- School Road already experiences concentrated pedestrian activity associated with the school.

- The applicant proposes speed cushions and additional pedestrian infrastructure, which in itself demonstrates that the current arrangement is inadequate for the traffic likely to be generated.
- Increased traffic on roads serving established residential areas will materially change the character and safety of those routes.
- The traffic surveys have not been shown to represent seasonal traffic conditions, and further assessment of impacts on pedestrians, cyclists and road safety is required.

The proposal conflicts with:

- Core Strategy Policy CS.26 (Transport and Communications);
- Development Requirements SPD Part C (Access and Connectivity);
- Development Requirements SPD Part O (Parking and Travel);
- NPPF Policy TR6;
- National Design Guide principles relating to safe movement and walkable communities.

6. Failure to Respect Existing Settlement Form

Salford Priors has evolved incrementally and displays a varied village form characterised by lower densities, open views, green gaps and a clear distinction between settlement and countryside. The proposed estate introduces an extensive engineered housing layout, formal street hierarchy, urban drainage infrastructure, parking courts, attenuation features and suburban estate characteristics that are not representative of the historic evolution of the village. Despite references to local materials and landscaping, the development remains a large-scale suburban estate rather than an organic extension of the settlement.

The proposal therefore fails to satisfy:

- Core Strategy Policy CS.9 (Design and Distinctiveness);
- Development Requirements SPD Parts A, B and D;
- National Design Guide principles relating to Context, Identity and Built Form.

7. Secondary Education Provision

The Parish Council accepts that Salford Priors primary school has capacity. The same cannot be said of secondary education. Children from the village are currently unable to obtain places at Alcester Academy, which is oversubscribed, and Stratford High School is also oversubscribed. Parents in the village are already facing a difficult process in securing secondary school places for their children.

The addition of 99 dwellings would generate further demand for secondary places in a catchment where existing provision is already exhausted. The application does not demonstrate how this additional demand would be accommodated. In particular:

- Village children are already unable to secure places at their local secondary school, Alcester Academy;
- Stratford High School, the alternative option, is also oversubscribed;
- Families may be required to travel longer distances to secure a place, increasing reliance on school transport and private car journeys; and
- No secure commitment has been shown to deliver additional secondary capacity before the new homes are occupied.

The Parish Council therefore considers that the proposal has not demonstrated that the scale of development can be accommodated by the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure, as required under Policy S5(1)(j). It also fails to show that the development would be supported by adequate community infrastructure. The Parish Council requests that the District Council seeks the views of the Local Education Authority and requires a clear, evidenced and fully funded education contribution before any approval is considered.

8. Failure to Meet Identified Local Housing Need

The Parish Council has carried out its own Housing Needs Survey, which identifies the need for smaller homes, bungalows and accessible accommodation for local people. The proposed development would not meet that identified need.

In particular, local people are unlikely to meet the eligibility criteria for the social and affordable housing proposed. The affordable housing offer would therefore not be available to the residents of Salford Priors for whom the need has been identified, and would not deliver the benefit that the applicant claims. This is compounded by inconsistencies in the affordable housing tenure figures within the application documents, and by a housing mix that is weighted towards larger market dwellings and does not reflect the survey findings.

The Parish Council accepts the need for additional housing, but the scheme as proposed does not respond to the housing needs of the village and so cannot be said to deliver a genuine local benefit that would outweigh the harm identified in this objection.

9. Response to the Applicant's Planning Statement

Paragraph 4.3 to 4.8 – NPPF Policy S5(1)(j)

The Parish Council recognises that the Council's five-year housing land supply position is relied upon by the applicant. However, Policy S5(1)(j) permits development outside settlements only where it would, among other requirements, be physically well related to an existing settlement and of a scale that can be accommodated by existing or proposed infrastructure. The Parish Council does not accept that the scale of the scheme is appropriate or that these tests are met.

Other inspectors have applied a broader interpretation of "well related" than simple proximity:

- In an application for commercial units at Bilsborrow, Wyre District (DCS: 200-015-170), the inspector found the site was not well related despite being "physically well related due to the extent and positioning of the built form around it", having considered "how the proposal itself would relate to the surrounding character" and concluded that it would "significantly harm the character and appearance of the area".
- In an application for 66 homes on a village edge at Aston Clinton, Buckinghamshire (DCS: 200-015-167), the inspector determined that the site was not physically well related despite being "very close to the settlement", accessible from an existing road and "well located in terms of facilities and services". The inspector found the scheme "harmful to the character and appearance of the area" and that it would "harm the setting and context of the village", and was therefore "not physically well related to the settlement and therefore does not comply with criterion j of policy S5".

The same reasoning applies here. The proximity of the site to the built-up area does not outweigh the harm to character, setting and context identified in this objection.

Paragraphs 2.4, 9.21 and 10.2 – Character and Density

The Planning Statement describes the area as an edge-of-village low-medium density suburban environment and asserts that the proposed plot sizes and density are in keeping with it, representing the most effective use of land. The Parish Council disputes this. A density of 35 dwellings per hectare is well above the 8 to 20 dwellings per hectare typical of Salford Priors, and more than seven times that of Priors Crescent (4.9 dwellings per hectare). Housing built recently or in the late 20th Century on the village edge cannot be taken to define the established character of the settlement as a whole.

Policy DP3 and Policy L3

Policy DP3 requires proposals to respond to their context, including the history, character and features of the site and its setting, so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings. Although it does not preclude change or increased density where justified under Policies L2 and L3, Policy L3 requires development footprints to make the best use of a site's development potential taking into account other policies in the Framework, which include those on character and heritage. No such justification has been demonstrated here. In the Aston Clinton decision (DCS: 200-015-167) the inspector found conflict with DP3 on the broader basis of "harm I have found in relation to the context and setting of the village".

10. Additional Matters of Concern

Impact on existing residents

- The new access road would run alongside existing homes, giving rise to noise, headlights, lighting, pedestrian activity and loss of screening.

- Further assessment of effects on neighbouring properties and gardens is required before any approval.

Expansion into open countryside

- The development would extend the village into unallocated countryside.
- No clear, long-term settlement boundary has been demonstrated, and approval would increase pressure for further development towards Avon Edge.

Loss of productive farmland

- Approximately 5.8 hectares of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land, including Grade 2 and Grade 3a land, would be lost.
- This should be considered alongside wider pressures on farmland, including the proposed Arrow Valley Solar project.

Housing mix and local need

- It has not been shown that the proposed housing mix reflects the findings of the 2025 Housing Needs Survey, which identifies need for smaller homes, bungalows and accessible accommodation.
- There are inconsistencies in the affordable housing tenure figures within the application documents.
- Consideration of alternative locations is inadequate, including earlier work on a much smaller local-needs housing scheme.

Infrastructure and cumulative growth

Salford Priors has already experienced significant housing growth. Concerns remain regarding secondary school capacity, school transport, healthcare and service capacity, and whether infrastructure will be delivered before homes are occupied.

Industrial noise

- Some plots would be exposed to existing commercial and industrial noise.
- Further evidence is required that mitigation will be sufficient and will not restrict existing businesses.

Drainage, biodiversity and bats

- The deliverability of the drainage strategy is questioned.
- Ecological impacts are a concern, particularly bat activity observed around the site.
- Assurance is sought that biodiversity net gain claims are achievable and properly evidenced.

Consultation and community influence

While the Parish Council accepts that consultation took place, it requests clearer evidence of how public concerns led to changes in the scheme.

Conclusion

Salford Priors Parish Council accepts the need for additional housing and recognises the benefits of affordable homes. However, it considers that the proposed development represents an unsustainable and disproportionate expansion of the village into open countryside. The proposal would:

- Introduce an excessive number of dwellings for this location;
- Urbanise a prominent rural edge site;
- Generate unacceptable pedestrian and highway conflict;
- Harm the setting of the Conservation Area and nearby heritage assets;
- Cause the permanent loss of high-quality agricultural land;
- Fail to respect the established character, form and density of Salford Priors;
- Conflict with Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy Policies CS.5, CS.8, CS.9, CS.15, AS.10 and CS.26, the Development Requirements SPD and relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

For these reasons, Salford Priors Parish Council strongly objects to the application and requests that planning permission be refused.

Salford Priors Parish Council