

Open letter from Kerry Barnes, Chairman Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council

31st January 2016

Dear Parishioners

Just before Christmas 2015 we received a letter from a company called Gladman Developments Ltd explaining that they were considering an outline planning application for up to 99 new homes on a site to the south of the village off Finchingfield Road.

The letter went on to say that Gladman Developments will shortly be undertaking consultation with nearby residents by distributing a leaflet detailing their proposals.

They also said that they would welcome our thoughts and if we wish to meet in a closed forum to discuss the proposals they would be happy to oblige.

I wrote back to Gladman Developments saying that we would be happy to meet with them, but we could not agree to a closed meeting as we felt that this was an issue that ought to be in the public domain. We subsequently had a reply saying that they could only agree to a meeting if it was closed.

The item was put on the agenda for our January PC meeting with the intention of deciding what the PC's response should be and how we might involve the village as a whole. It was decided by the PC members not to meet directly with Gladman as it was felt that we had little to gain at this point in time and would be leaving ourselves open to being mis-quoted in any future planning application.

Gladman Developments are considering applying for Outline Planning Permission on behalf of the land owner. They do all the planning and building work at no cost to the land owner, making a healthy profit when the land gains planning permission

An application for Outline Planning Permission is generally used to find out, at an early stage, whether or not a proposal is likely to be approved by the planning authority, before any substantial costs are incurred. This could be followed by a full application if they consider it viable

Gladman Past History

The Gladman Group has submitted applications for at least 40 sites, including land in Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Essex and Buckinghamshire. Its website boasts of its track record in securing consent quickly, saying "think 14 months not 10 years." They have found a way to secure approval for controversial housing schemes opposed by local residents by appealing to national inspectors. They are targeting greenfield sites in areas where councils have failed to publish their own plans for new housing — allowing the government's national Planning Inspectorate to step in and fast-track developments.

Gladman arranged a meeting with the planning department at Braintree District Council on 25th January and following this meeting the PC have been in contact with BDC to find out what the proposals are but BDC were unwilling to give any detail as the meeting was confidential. The PC are now seeking a meeting directly with Gladman.

Going forward

The PC is very keen to involve all members of the community and will at an appropriate time organise an open meeting to let everyone give their opinion. However it would be counterproductive to do so before we are in possession of more detail about the proposals. There is at this point no method of expressing any kind of opposition. The PC have also been in touch with other Parish Councils where similar proposals have been made in order to gain from their experiences.

Kerry Barnes

Chairman

Steeple Bumpstead Parish Council

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