

Village group rejects homes which could boost numbers at closure-threatened school

Report by JENNY LYON

A village committee whose primary school faces closure because of falling pupil numbers is objecting to a plan for 18 new houses which could increase the population by a third.

Corrie and Sannox Village Committee says the plan, for affordable housing at the Corrie Quarry site, is a 'gross over-development'.

John Thomson Construction Limited, has applied to North Ayrshire Council (NAC) to build 18 semi-detached houses at the quarry together with associated roads, parking, footpaths and services.

NAC is considering closing the primary school this year because it predicts its school roll will continue to fall.

The committee says that while it accepts there is an urgent need for affordable housing the plan would profoundly affect the village.

A decision to object was made at an open meeting last Thursday.

Village committee chairman Jim Lees said: 'The committee wants to encourage affordable housing but there is not enough room for all of these houses. The ones built at the back will be under the cliff of the old quarry.'

Outlining the objections to NAC's chief development control officer Jim Miller, village committee secretary David Underdown wrote: 'One detailed circulation presented at the meeting suggests that it could increase the population of Corrie and Sannox by approximately one third.

'It leaves us in a position of appearing negative about the application when there is in fact a strong consensus within the village on the urgent need for local provision of affordable housing for young people and families. However, in the circumstances we have no choice but to object to the proposal.'

Councillor Margie Currie said: 'The

principle of it is quite disappointing especially when the need for affordable housing has been so widely acknowledged and especially in light of the recent aspirations to keep Corrie Primary School open. I can make no comment specifically on this case because of my role on the planning committee.'

Andrew Martin of Isle of Arran Homes (IOAH) said such developments should be welcomed.

'There is a growing need in Corrie and across the Isle of Arran for affordable housing and we are keen to be involved in this development,' he told the Banner.

'At the present time IOAH have yet to sign any contract with the developers of the Corrie site but any provision of affordable housing to help first-time owner-occupiers must be welcomed.'

But MSP Kenneth Gibson said he thought the objections would have little effect on the campaign to keep the primary school open.

He told *The Banner*: 'I do not think this decision should impact on the future of Corrie Primary School as it has enough merit to be retained regardless of this.'

'In any case, I believe a revised plan with fewer homes will be acceptable. The Housing Initiative for Arran Residents (HIFAR) plans should come to fruition in a year or two.

Together both developments will no doubt help ensure children in Corrie and Sannox benefit from attending Corrie Primary school.'

HIFAR wants to see smaller clachan-type developments on the island.

At a recent meeting at Corrie to discuss the consultation document about the closure of the school NAC was urged not to close it before seeing what effect the planned new homes would have.