

Central Bedfordshire Draft Local Plan

Consultation Response: Representation from Campton & Chicksands Parish Council

July 2017

Campton and Chicksands Parish Council is in support of the basic principles of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan, acknowledging the need to respond on the delivery of strategic changes to infrastructure, housing and employment to meet future demands in the next two decades. The Parish Council is pleased that the Plan aims to ensure that growth is to be delivered with the supporting infrastructure in place and development should be of the right character and quality. To this end Campton and Chicksands Parish Council would like to make the following responses regarding assessments made by Central Bedfordshire Council with reference to the draft Local Plan; Appendix D: Area D Assessments; Site Assessment Technical Document Appendix D: Preliminary Site Assessment Results, Site Assessment Forms: Campton and Chicksands and other ancillary documents cited as appropriate.

Area D Assessment: Campton

Planning

In July 2017 Campton and Chicksands Parish Council agreed to develop a Neighbourhood Plan and at the time of writing is awaiting Central Bedfordshire Council to define its Designated Area.

People, Communities, Facilities and Services

Due to the limited size of the settlement Campton lacks capacity to provide additional services and facilities referred to in the assessment. The village encloses and is surrounded by prime pasture and agricultural land which form the unique character of the settlement. The close proximity of Shefford enables residents access to additional services. However, the Parish Council are concerned about the impact of any future developments in the parish adding to the already overstretched resources in Shefford, given ongoing and planned housing projects in Shefford and Meppershall.

With respect to leisure sites around the settlement, Campton has a village Recreation Ground, adjacent to the Lower School, which includes a play area. Within Campton village there is no evidence that this resource is overstretched but in Chicksands, managed by Annington Housing, there is no designated children's play area and no access to adjacent land that could provide such a facility for residents.

Campton Village Hall is a useful resource within the village and is used by residents of both Campton and Chicksands. It is located on a small plot with little parking (3 spaces) and has limited capacity. Although discussed at length in the past, expansion does not seem feasible and there are no sites available for relocation. Parking in Brookside and on Gravenhurst Road causes congestion of traffic passing through the village, particularly at peak times, further exacerbated by the frequent passage of heavy plant vehicles to the Hanlon site. There is no consideration of these issues in the assessment documentation.

The Parish Council also acknowledge that Campton Lower School is at capacity and that the school site is unable to accommodate expansion. This should be flagged as a critical issue (Red) in all the Site Assessments. Middle and Upper Schools in Shefford are also up to capacity and unsuitable for expansion.

Transport and Movement

Two of the three exit routes from Campton enter onto the A507 and it is the sole exit route from Chicksands. The Parish Council is very concerned about the volume of traffic that will increase on the A507 resulting in issues of road safety and the impact of noise on those living in proximity to the road. Additional concerns are for school children using the pelican crossing across the A507 to access Priory Road on their route to Campton Lower School. Similarly, pedestrians crossing over at the A600/A507 roundabout by East Lodge feel vulnerable as there is no traffic control. The Parish Council are further concerned about the likely increase in volume of traffic due to housing developments in Shefford (particularly Campton Fields) and traffic towards and from the M1 along the A507 due to the increases in

housing at Henlow and Arlesey and the Blue Abyss development attracting both employment and tourism into the area. There is also an anticipated increase in the amount of traffic on the A1 from the expansion of Biggleswade and the new market town of Tempsford. If the A1 improvements are not made before the construction of housing, particularly to the two lane section, we anticipate there will be complete grid lock at peak times.

The Parish Council support the analysis by Central Bedfordshire with respect to Sensitivity and Development Effects and its Capacity Assessment, except for point 4. If Campton is to retain its rural and historic characteristics then development will not release land suitable for provision of allotments, facilities for young people, play areas or formal large recreation areas, no matter how desirable. The settlement lacks capacity in all these respects, particularly given its proximity to the A507 where potential development sites are located.

The Parish Council are also confounded by the summary statement that “development to the north of Campton would increase accessibility to the services and facilities available in Chicksands”. To what services and facilities does this refer and how would development increase accessibility?

Call for Sites Assessments

Introduction

Campton (including Chicksands) is identified in the Local Plan as a small village. The document also states SP6 ‘envelopes of small villages, development will be limited to infill development, small scale employment and community facilities’. It also states that ‘rural areas will usually be limited to 10 dwellings in order to preserve the character of the settlements’.

Campton Village is set against the backdrop of historic treed pasture land, attractive rolling arable fields and important roadside views that have been recognised in successive Local Plans over many decades. The unique pasture land is used for grazing of cattle and sheep and has a long history of traditional farming with minimal use of pesticides and herbicides resulting in high levels of biodiversity. This quality pasture land noted in CBC assessments as “very rare within CBC”, together with Campton Plantation and the rolling arable land to the South East of Campton support a rich variety of wildlife and is a much valued visual amenity for parishioners, and for recreational walking and cycling by residents from Shefford, Meppershall and further afield.

Chicksands is adjacent to the registered parklands of Chicksands Priory and includes Campton Plantation, a mature broadleaf woodland plantation. This plantation provides a valued natural environment for both wildlife and leisure activities.

Some eleven designated heritage assets are located within the Parish including grade II* listed buildings. The Local Plan site assessments clearly take some account of these ecological and heritage assets and Campton & Chicksands Parish Council acknowledge such recognition by Central Bedfordshire Council.

The Parish Council have reviewed the “Site Assessment Summary” document along with the completed and detailed Site “Assessment Framework for Housing” documents for each of the 5 sites in the parish put forward during the 2016 call for sites initiated by CBC.

Should any sites ultimately be carried forward to the final Local Plan the Parish Council will be looking to very small numbers of dwellings with sympathetic designs in keeping with existing buildings together with retention of existing landscape features, including mature trees, grass banks & hedgerows. In its Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council will seek to implement policies to ensure these objectives are met.

ALP287 – Land North of Greenway Portion going forward for further consideration

The number of proposed dwellings, if 38 homes, would make this a large development for the size of this small village.

Site ALP287 makes up the vast majority of the historic pasture land referred to in the Introduction. It is a unique and productive landscape managed by traditional farming methods. In particular the treed Glebeland pasture running from the junction of Priory Road & Rectory Road down to the Greenway is critical to Campton Village’s rural

character and provides important and attractive roadside views to the rolling hills beyond Shefford and from the Glebe Barns towards Kiln Farm.

The detailed assessment report indicates that the “developable” site going forward for further consideration is a portion (approx. 10% of the total area). The Parish Council are yet to be informed of the precise location of this portion of ALP287 and as such are unable to offer specific, constructive and focussed feedback on the location.

In general we would oppose any development on the Glebeland on ecological and heritage grounds. In addition, any development would in our view cause substantial harm to the rural character of the village. We have the following comments on the site assessment:-

Point 1.... Possible inconsistency as CBC methodology indicates 38 homes but an answer of “yes” is given indicating site likely to accommodate less than 10 homes. Does this relate to Local Plan policy SP6?

Point 23.... ‘Easy access’ to the A507 may not be true, depending on the intended location of these properties. As indicated in the report, the A507 is a problem with 20 hot spots. A potential 38-70 additional cars would compound this problem and increase the volume of traffic entering the village. Rectory Road in the vicinity of the Lower School could not cope with the additional traffic and would cause safety issues for children at the school. As the same criteria apply for this site as for ALP390, the Parish Council feel this should be RED (as to the negative impact on the character of the area and would not accompany the settlement’s current building form).

Point 17.... Campton & Chicksands Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Point 31.... School capacity: the Parish Council feel this should be RED. The school is full to capacity and no further expansion is possible.

Point 35.... Road noise would increase significantly as highlighted in ALP390.

Point 36.... The Parish Council are also concerned regarding some apparent inconsistency with ALP390 (Land at Kiln Farm) which has been excluded from the Local Plan process at this stage. ALP390, like ALP287, is 100% grade 2 agricultural land comprising treed pasture and maybe viewed as a part of the same distinctive landscape critical to the character of Campton Village. Accepting that ALP390 is excluded, shouldn’t the same arguments have been made to exclude ALP287?

ALP390 – Land at Kiln Farm.... Site to be excluded from Local Plan process

There are decided similarities to ALP287 in landscape and land type.

NLP082 – Land on the South East of Greenway.... Majority portion going forward for further consideration

The number of proposed dwellings as 38 homes would make this a large development for the size of this small village.

Site NLP082 is a strip of the arable field bounding the south east side of Greenway. The road boundary of this site is characterised by a grassed bank, established native hedgerow and occasional mature trees and gives a rural look and feel to this approach to Campton Village, also affording roadside views of the rolling arable fields across to Meppershall.

Whilst arable land is unlikely to support the biodiversity of treed pasture this landscape does support a variety of wildlife. The Parish Council believe any reduction of this land could have a detrimental effect on their survival.

We have the following comments on the site assessment:-

Point 1.... CBC methodology indicates 38 homes but an answer of “no” is given indicating site likely to accommodate more than 10 homes. Given Local Plan policy SP6 we would expect the number of homes built to be 10 or less as for site ALP287.

Point 17.... Campton & Chicksands Parish Council is in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Point 23.... Any development on this site would result in the loss of field views for dwellings on the opposite side of Greenway.

Point 29... Although the site is directly accessible onto Greenway this will further increase traffic (again potentially 38-70 cars) to and from the A507 junction. This junction has already required some traffic calming but turning out from the village via Greenway continues to be difficult at peak times. Pedestrians also cross from the opposite side of Greenway in order to use the subway to pass into Shefford, many of whom are children walking/cycling to middle and upper schools.

Point 31.... School capacity: the Parish Council agree this should be RED. The school is full to capacity and no further expansion is possible.

Point 36.... The housing would adversely affect the landscape and character of the area.

NLP083 – Land on the South East side of Greenway. Campton Rear Site.... Site to be excluded from Local Plan process

No comments at this stage. The Parish Council is in general agreement with the CBC assessment outcomes for this site.

NLP083 – Beadlow Park.... Site to be excluded from Local Plan process

No comments at this stage. Should the decision to exclude from the Local Plan be reversed significant concerns over additional traffic on the A507 and general infrastructure provision may be voiced.