

Dear Councilor,

Re: Local Plan Framework for Housing – Campton Sites ALP287 and NLP082

We are writing to express some concerns related to the local plan and specifically the two proposed sites in Campton.

There are two sites proposed in Campton, ALP287 and NLP082 which we do not believe should be supported for a number of reasons. Before the final document is constructed in the next few days and published in January, we feel we must raise a number of important points:

I. Campton and Chicksands are two very different areas, connected only by the Parish name. Their history and house construction are very different. It is misleading to say that Campton comprises of 1700 residents and 580 dwellings. If you take the overall total population for the Parish that of 1204 (figures provided by Central Bedfordshire Council) only 580 (approximately) live in Campton. We believe that combining the two areas obscures the real extent of development and its impact on Campton in isolation.

II. Identification of sites: Two sites were carried forward in the call for sites, both with a possibility of thirty-eight houses being built on each site. The type of houses that would be built in the village would mean there would be at least two people living in each house, probably more, meaning that there would be an increase of seventy-six people on each site. If both sites were to progress, there would be a potential increase of one hundred and fifty-two people. As an increase in percentage terms it doesn't seem much when you look at figures for Chicksands and Campton 6% for one site 12% if both sites were developed. However, if you look at the figures for Campton alone the figures become 14% for one site and 28% for the two. Campton is identified as a SMALL village so to increase the housing population by even 14% is considerable.

III. People: It is inaccurate to say that the area consists of “younger households in housing prices within their means” The majority of housing in Chicksands could be said to be in this category, however in relation to Campton itself the majority of residents in Campton in isolation are significantly over the median age for Central Bedfordshire and property prices are most certainly not ‘low cost’.

IV. Transport: Before considering an increase of housing there needs to be a study carried out on the impact on the roads in the village particularly related to Rectory Road and Greenway (near the church). In the past month we have seen the road blocked with no traffic being able to move when a

funeral was taking place. School buses had to just sit there. Due to excessive street parking on the bend we have now had two near accidents, with a car driving on to the lawn of one of the houses. The area on Rectory Road has similar problems particularly when the school is in session.

V. Land use: The centre of Campton is located within the Green Infrastructure network and part of the GI corridor. Both sites are identified as Grade two agricultural land and should be protected. Development of the Glebe would result in the loss of versatile agricultural land. Whilst the Glebe (ALP 287) is not common land, the Glebe is viewed very much as the heart of the village, development that will all but obscure the Glebe from any viewpoint in the village will cause irreparable damage to the village and setting.

VI. Historical Importance: It should not be underestimated the importance of the Glebe land as part of the historical past of the village. This is pasture land that has been grazed by cattle and sheep for centuries and forms part of the history of the village.

VII. Listed Buildings: There are a number of listed buildings and features close to or bounding the Glebe. Selection as a potential development site will undoubtedly have a negative impact on these valuable and unique features of our Village.

VIII. Local Amenities: The village has limited infrastructure resources. The school is oversubscribed as are all of the local schools and consequently parents would be using vehicular transport to access other local schools. Any development is going to result in increased reliance on private vehicles increasing the already unmanageable levels of traffic and street parking in the village.

IX. Wildlife: A study should be carried out on the impact on wildlife before any decision is made to carry these sites onto the next stage. There are bats and large birds of prey in the area. If these are present, there must also be other creatures present which they feed off such as dormice, voles etc.

X. The village is included in the Domesday book. The village has a proud and interesting history and it does not want to lose its identity and be swallowed up by further development. Development of these sites is likely to cause harm to the character and identity of the village.

CBC's own assessments of both sites raise issues of amenity and injury to heritage assets similar to those we have outlined above. CBC has publicly stated that "we will retain green space to prevent existing settlements merging, keeping their identity and the rural character of the area". To put these two sites forward as part of the plan would clearly contradict this statement. Whilst we acknowledge that there is a perceived need for housing development in the area, this should not be at any cost. There is a balance to be struck between the need for development and preserving the character of villages like Campton that provide a setting and context for Bedfordshire as a County. It's part of the reason people want to live here in the first place.

We also have some concerns in relation to the online documentation. The way in which the on-line documentation was presented and allocated into sections was difficult to navigate even for the computer literate and the presentation made it very difficult to get a clear picture of which criteria are being used and the reasons for their acceptability to CBC or otherwise. We, like many others in the village had great difficulty in getting to understand or be able to assess the proposals and consequently, make our concerns public.

We are also concerned that the synopsis used for the concerns that have been raised by residents makes does not fully or clearly communicate the genuine extent or scale of concern about the possible developments in Campton.

We do not believe that the sites proposed under the local plan should be included in the plan and we would urge you not to approve the plan in its current form whilst it contains sites ALP287 and NLP082.