

Priory House
Monks Walk
Chicksands
Shefford
BedfordshireSG17 5TQ

Marston Moreteyne Action Group (MMAG)

28 August 2017

Dear Sir / Madam

CBC Local Development Plan Consultation Feedback

Thank you for the opportunity to view and explore the Council thinking for local development. MMAG has an active and engaged local Parish community of over 300 people and an established history of representing the views of this Parish with regard constant housing and industrial development options. Our website is well used and can be found at www.mmetag.com.

As your lead Councillor behind increased house building has already warned off, via the local press, any attempts at NIMBYism; MMAG would like to set a context to our comments. We were supportive of the Marston Park development and accepted this substantial increase to the size of our village. We spoke against the latest Hallam's development (Moreteyne Park) but only on the grounds that we felt the village had a right to absorb the Marston Park development before this larger scale development began.

In MMAG's view the planned seven new urban developments will in effect begin the process of coalescence of Marston Moreteyne, Lidlington, Brogborough, Aspley Guise and Woburn Sands. The promise of the MK/Bedford canal and new parkland are dubious and there is no stated commitment to the canal actually being built, simply that it 'could aid the building of the canal'. The use of the terms villages is unhelpful when the development will be larger than Ampthill Town.

The land being offered, as always, by O & H Properties runs the entire length from Marston Moreteyne to Brogborough between the rail line and the old A421. MMAG wishes to remind the Council that 700 people marched on the A421 to oppose the pseudo 'eco-town' proposal from this land developer and the essence of our opposition was the coalescence of Bedford and Milton Keynes. Yet here we are again..... The proposal seeks to create ribbon development through the Marston Vale and across to Milton Keynes whilst continuing to build on existing settlements like Marston Moreteyne, Lower Shelton and Upper Shelton.

The proposals lack any coherent strategic planning approach. The Council's preferred option of calling for developers to offer up land and then taking land offered and exploring how much development it can take is unhelpful. If there were any strategic thinking in place MMAG would want to understand what the strategic masterplan for Brogborough was that goes beyond dumping giant warehouse after giant warehouse on a tiny settlement. In addition why - if this part of the Marston Vale is so important for sustainable housing development - isn't the land adjacent to the key East-West rail interchange at Ridgmont being proposed for new housing? We were disheartened to learn at the consultation meeting that the Council has already allocated this land for further warehousing.

The space between Marston Moreteyne, Lidlington and Brogborough is actually very small. MMAG believes that there is no capacity in that space for four urbanisations of an **initial** 5,000 homes. The Council's recent history shows that you have a practice of increasing approved sites allocation before building is complete as you did at the Wixams development). In addition, the Council's obsession of allocating new employment land with housing reflects an era centuries ago when the majority of people worked where they lived; this simply isn't true anymore. With so much employment land allocated at Brogborough and within the Hallams development there is no requirement to develop the area around Fired Earth on the Old A421 for employment. All that will happen, as at Lidlington recently and within Marston Park, is that the developer wrings their hands and says "but look we've tried and no business wanted this location.....can I convert this to more housing"? Which you then approve....

The statement that the new urbanisation is close to the proposed key East-West rail interchange at Ridgmont is disingenuous. The site is closer to Lidlington train station and has no access to Ridgmont (or anyway actually) without people getting in their cars.

The proposals will decimate the farm land locally that grows crops that help feed the Nation; an increasingly challenging goal. By creating housing, employment and park land and leaving unsustainable pockets of farm land these will be immediately offered by O & H Properties in the next round of development land requests. This will be in addition to the already **unspoken approval** by the Council to build hundreds more houses on the land between Woburn Road and Manor Road.

Finally of course there is the fundamental arguments from CPRE that challenges the Council on why they are wedded to highly inflated housing requirement figures. This is something that MMAG similarly cannot understand. By using an approach different to that used in surrounding areas (The Office Housing Statistics) Central Bedfordshire has decided to make this location a free for all for developers creating housing way beyond local need. Our infrastructure is struggling; our roads are problematic with the centre of Marston Moreteyne very congested around the Post Office junction. This area simply won't cope with more people driving in to use the GP, post office, supermarkets etc. We've yet to experience the impact of people living in the Moreteyne Park development in this location. Our health and social care is failing. Our GP provision continues to rely on locums as it has for years with people struggling to get appointments. The Council itself in its own documents states: "Concern has been raised in relation to local infrastructure capacity in the context of existing schools and there are also concerns in relation to healthcare facility capacity in this location. (The) Lower school (is) unlikely to be able to accommodate any further significant development in Marston. A new lower school site may be required. Middle and upper school places are also tight". The Council goes on to say that Marston Moreteyne's housing growth figures show that the number of houses in 2006: 1,807 Number of houses in 2016: 2,237 = Percentage Growth: 23.80%. If you add outstanding completions (new builds approved but not yet up) that adds another 644 = Percentage Growth: 28.79%. The neighbouring Bedford Council has plans for 19,000 homes, how does Central Bedfordshire Council justify its own figures when compared to this? This community expects that a line is drawn and that we retain a traditional village concept rather than the Council's new 'village concept' of something the size of Amptill Town.

As well as the threat to land that feeds us, the Council are also proposing building beyond need in an area the Environment Agency has classified an already in "serious water stress". This is surely irresponsible?

Neighbouring Bedford Council has plans for 19,000 homes, how does Central Bedfordshire Council justify its own figures when compared to this? The volume of housing versus employment capacity means that the Council is actively planning to pursue a growth plan that forces thousands of people into outward commuting on overcrowded rail and road systems to the detriment of all who live and work in Central Bedfordshire today.

MMAG acknowledges the needs for additional housing and as stated earlier we have been supportive of development that is sustainable and manageable. Unfortunately MMAG cannot support the proposal for 5,000 new homes in four 'villages' between Marston Moreteyne, Brogborough and Lidlington.

Yours faithfully

Stewart Long
Secretary MMAG