

Good evening to you all. It is time to save a really special piece of our countryside and all its inhabitants, human and otherwise, from the bulldozers! This is YOUR CHANCE to have YOUR SAY!

Please note, this is not professional legal/planning advice and you should rely on the documents on the planning website for their precise content. We thank Councillor James Jamieson for his assistance. If you would like to receive this note in a MS Word document, please email us at notogreenwoodsnewtown@gmail.com with 'update' in the heading. We are also preparing more detailed submissions and comments for the planning department.

We will start with general **dos** and **don'ts** and **hows** then give you some ideas of the sorts of things that count for planning under headings with some more specifics under each heading by way of explanation. (Where we mention 'Chapters' and 'Appendices', these are references to the application documents/reports on the planning [website](#), so that you can look at them.) The CBC also provides guidance at <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/planning/view-comment/make-comment.aspx> on objections.

DO

- Get EVERYONE over the age of 18 in your household to object – we need numbers!
- Anyone can object – they don't need to live here – they just need to object to the application in principle, or perhaps because they have visited you here and enjoyed the area!
- Be polite
- Be factual
- Use headings if you can – let's try and help the poor planners who will be inundated!
- Choose what matters to you – it is your objection – you don't need to cover everything in this note.
- Use your OWN WORDS and your OWN EXPERIENCES – if you copy and paste anyone else's objection, it may not count or all those objections could be classed as one objection!
- Make it your own! You may have a lot to say – then go for it – or you may just want to be short – that's fine too. Every relevant objection counts.

DON'T

- Talk about loss of value to your home – it may matter deeply to you but it isn't a planning consideration.
- Talk about the land owner or developer, or profit or motivation – it may feel good to get your feelings off your chest but it's best reserved for the pub or dinner table - it isn't a planning consideration and will not help you succeed.

HOW TO OBJECT

In order of preference:-

- **On the website by clicking on this link, and if you have a reference number, put it in or just click below where it says 'click here' in blue, if you don't.**
<http://plantech.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/PLANTECH/DCWebPages/acolnetcgi.gov?ACTION=UNWRAP&RIPNAME=Root.PgeCommentNeighbourForm&TheSystemkey=623492>
- **By email to debbie.quinn@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk quoting reference CB/21/02011/OUT**
- **By post to: Debbie Quinn, Planning, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford SG17 5TQ**

Some Key Facts

- The development site covers ca. **290 hectares** (that's over 700 acres) of unspoilt, picturesque, rural countryside which is home to extensive wildlife. There are numerous historic buildings in and around the site.
- The proposal is for ca. **3,850** new dwellings, circa 10,000 people.
- The tallest buildings will be up to **14m** in height (the documents refer to 12m +/- 2m).
- The developer's own report shows that the development will be visible across a huge area including **Meppershall, Upper Gravenhurst, Cainhoe Manor, Shillington, Silsoe, Pulloxhill, Barton-le-Clay, Sharpenhoe, Harlington, Hexton, Apsley End, Barton Hills National Nature Reserve, Pegsdon Hills Nature Reserve, Knocking Hoe National Nature Reserve and the Chilterns AONB**. (See map at Table 15.7, [Chapter 15](#))
- The duration of construction works has not been defined but is suggested to be **17 years** (Chapter 6, paragraph 6.92).

Some of the Grounds for Potential Objections

Transport/traffic

Traffic is a really important and relevant point for consideration. It is VERY important to comment on your experience of usual, pre-pandemic traffic levels, particularly on the A6, the roundabouts and junctions and the amount of cut-through traffic in surrounding villages.

The traffic report and projections prepared for the developer rely on a traffic survey carried out in September 2020 **during the pandemic**. They report that the Clophill Roundabout has spare capacity, working during peak times with minimal delays to drivers, typically from 7 seconds to a worst case of 14 seconds (Table 8-4, [Appendix 7.1](#)). The Barton roundabout from 5 seconds to 10 seconds. (Table 8-14, Appendix 7.1)

- What is your experience of pre-pandemic traffic/congestion on the A6?
- What is your experience of pre-pandemic traffic problems in nearby villages?

We are also concerned that the projections of the number of journeys are too low. The report projects that although there will be almost 4000 new dwellings, there will only be ca. 3157 extra car journeys during the morning rush hour and ca. 2500 extra journeys in the evening rush hour (Table 6-14, [Appendix 7.1](#)). Even based on these starting points, they predict over 24,000 daily journeys from the development and increases in traffic of: 4405% and 387% on parts of the Gravenhurst-Barton Road; ca. 100% increase on the A6 south of the development; and ca. 50% increase on the A6 South of the Clophill junction (Table 7.10, [Chapter 7](#)).

- Are you concerned that this is too low a prediction?
- Do you feel that because of the likely delays on the main routes that much of the traffic will cut through Barton-le-Clay, Shillington, Gravenhurst, Campton, Meppershall, Silsoe, Pulloxhill, Greenfields and Higham Gobion?
- Is heavy construction traffic likely to be a problem for you? Construction could go on for 17 years.
- If you are a local resident, do you think most journeys to jobs/trains/schools/shops are by car? Is the developer's suggestion of cycling a realistic option for you? How will you find parking at the shops, schools or train station? What about delivery traffic?
- Are existing local bus services an adequate alternative for your journeys?

Coalescence of villages

The development site covers an area reaching from the edge of Barton le Clay, to the edge of Lower Gravenhurst, and to the edge of Wrest Park (see [map](#) – 'Illustrative Master Plan').

- We are concerned that the development will cause the effective merger of the villages of Barton, Silsoe and Lower Gravenhurst and will remove the clear band of countryside between them. Is this urban sprawl something you think should not be allowed?
- Did you choose to live here because of the rural character of your village? How do you feel this will be affected if the application succeeds?

Greenbelt

The southern part of the site is Greenbelt and therefore to develop it, the developers need to show that there are very special circumstances by which the benefits of the application outweigh the harm. The purpose of the Greenbelt is to prevent towns from sprawling into the countryside.

- Do you think it is important to preserve this area of Greenbelt?
- Can you see any benefits of the development, which outweigh the protection this area is afforded?

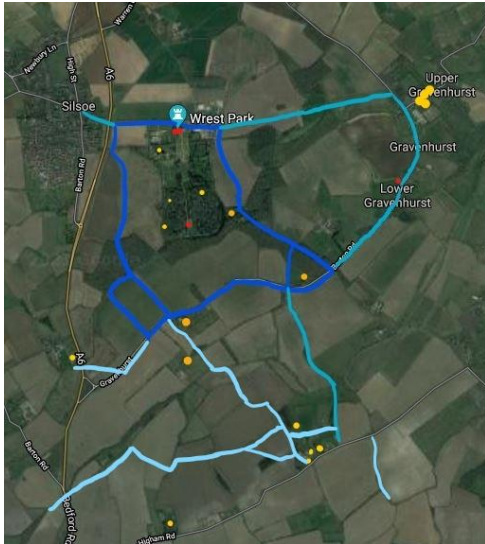
Impact on Wrest Park

We are incredibly lucky to have Wrest Park and its estate in our area, especially as English Heritage have invested so much in restoring the house, gardens and improving the surrounding environment. As well as being a Grade I listed site of national importance, the wider grounds provide a hugely valuable asset for recreational walks, games, cycling and horse riding etc. The development will come right up to the southern boundary of Wrest Park's landscaped grounds (see map linked above). The wonderful walks and rides (bike and horse) that can now be enjoyed around the edge of the estate would no longer be through unspoilt open countryside but would be through a modern, urban development. The developer says that there will be no adverse impact on Wrest Park because the gardens are enclosed by the woods to the South (see Chapter 12 for full details). The developer does however acknowledge that noise levels (from traffic and construction) would have a moderate adverse impact on Wrest Park.

- Do you think that the development would have significant detrimental impact on Wrest Park and its wider setting?
- Is the tranquil and unspoilt countryside to the South of Wrest Park (with its historic properties) an important part of the setting of Wrest Park in which it is enjoyed?
- Should we be doing as much as we can to enhance the public's enjoyment of the wildlife, views, tranquillity around Wrest Park? Is it important to you?

Recreation / footpaths and bridleways / quiet roads / visual impact

As alluded to above, we are incredibly lucky to have a wonderful range of footpaths and bridleways and quiet country roads to the south of Wrest Park. They are very popular with cyclists, walkers, bird watchers, horse riders etc. A wide range of people not only from the surrounding villages use them to enjoy the tranquillity, the wildlife, the historic buildings, the views or just to get exercise and for mental well-being. The circuit around Wrest Park is particularly popular, as marked in dark blue on the map below. (Yellow and red dots show some of the listed buildings.)



- Do you enjoy the footpaths and bridleways near to the site (and why)? Are the views important? Do you appreciate the fabulous skyline, views, sunsets, sunrises, or more?
- Are you concerned that the huge increase in traffic from the development would impact on this enjoyment (or your enjoyment of nearby routes)?
- Would 4000 new dwellings impact on your enjoyment of the area?
- Should we be trying to make the Barton/Gravenhurst road safer/quieter for all the horse riders, cyclists and walkers on the road and nearby footpaths to enhance the experience (at weekends or all the time)?
- What about light pollution from all the street lighting and houses?
- What about exercising your horses during the construction phase?
- Whatever you have enjoyed, or would like the opportunity to enjoy, or for your children to enjoy in the future, that you feel would be lost, you can mention here.

Wider views and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB)

The Chiltern Hills to the South of Barton-le-Clay are classified as an AONB and are a really important feature of the local countryside and ecology. However, the views down from the AONB will be changed hugely by a development of this scale. Also the views of the Barton Hills/AONB will be interrupted by the tall buildings in the development.

The developer's own report shows that the development will be visible across a huge area including Meppershall, Upper Gravenhurst, Cainhoe Manor, Shillington, Silsoe, Pulloxhill, Barton, Sharpenhoe, Harlington, Hexton, Apsley End, Barton Hills National Nature Reserve, Pegsdon Hills Nature Reserve, Knocking Hoe National Nature Reserve. (See map at Table 15.7, [Chapter 15](#))

- Does it matter if the predominantly unspoilt rural views from the AONB (i) are changed by a huge acreage construction site for 17 years; and (ii) are permanently changed by the huge development?
- Are they an important asset that should be preserved here, whilst so much development is occurring elsewhere in Central Bedfordshire?

Potential harm to wildlife and habitats

The rural countryside that forms the development site is rich in wildlife. It hosts numerous protected species including, in particular, 9 protected species of birds on the Red List (which means

that they need urgent protection), 5 Orange List species and 24 Green List species. See the bird survey at Appendix 9.4. Local residents also have seen Barn Owls, Tawny Owls, green woodpeckers, greater spotted woodpeckers, willow tits and coal tits among many others (which are not on the list in the survey). Note that the bird survey is inadequate in that it does not cover the northern part of the site (close to the woods and the wildlife sites) or winter breeding birds (Appendix 9.4, paragraphs 2.2, 3.3.1). We are concerned about loss of habitat for swallows, bats, swifts and skylarks among others. Three badger sets have also been identified in the Site. The development site is right next to two County Wildlife Sites (Buckle Grove and Wrest Park) and a broad stretch of woodland and so it forms an important foraging area and range which supports those wildlife sites.

The application plans to widen sections of the roads destroying mature hedgerows and trees in their path.

- English Heritage has been doing so much work at Wrest Park to improve the ecology; planting Diamond Jubilee woods, wildflower meadows, hedges and copses; should we be preserving the neighbouring land to maximise the effect of all that good work?
- Does the local wildlife and habitat matter?
- Are the birds an important part of the environment around Wrest Park and the site, and your enjoyment of it?
- Will circa 10,000 people (and their dogs and cats) right next to the County Wildlife Sites and Wrest Park harm that environment?
- Is it acceptable to tear down mature trees and hedges in this sensitive area to widen roads to accommodate the influx?

Damage to other local heritage

Planning law requires that listed buildings and their settings should be preserved because of their value to the community/environment in terms of history and appearance. Owners are required to jump through planning hoops to look after them properly and significant investment is made towards this. The map above shows some of the Grade I and Grade II listed buildings within and around the site. Exceptionally, there is also negligible modern development around the area making the area a very rare asset.

- Do you care about the protection of our historic buildings and the contribution that they make to the enjoyment of the rural landscape?
- Is the preservation of the rural settings of these buildings (in particular Fielden Farmhouse, Fielden House and Little Ion, along the Barton/Gravenhurst Road) important?
- Would a huge increase in traffic in front of these historic buildings detract from them?

The need for housing / sustainable development

The government's focus is on sustainable development (see [government guidance](#)). One important aspect of this is that houses should be built in areas where there are good facilities and transport arrangements so that road journeys are reduced not increased. Other aspects of sustainability are that you should not use the sites that are valuable from an agricultural/environmental/recreational perspective for development.

Central Bedfordshire Council's [Local Plan](#) (which has been through various consultation rounds and is close to finalisation) already identifies sufficient sites for housing development to satisfy demand for housing. This site was not included in the plan for obvious reasons.

- Do you think putting nearly 4000 dwellings here makes sense?

- If there have to be large developments, do you think they should be close to motorways/train stations/employment centres/hospitals?
- Are smaller 'infill' developments more suitable for this rural area?

Damage to local businesses

- If you have a local business (or are intending to start a business), which relies on the local amenities and the area being quiet and rural, you may want to say how this wholesale change of rural character to an urban environment will affect your business.

Public services (schools/health)

Are you concerned that circa 10,000 new residents (in addition to those from other planned developments) will cause undue strain on education and health services in the locality?

- What are your experiences of getting places in nearby schools?
- Is the locality close to A&E services?
- Are there adequate GP/Dental services with capacity for more residents?
- What will happen to ambulance waiting times?

Flooding

The development proposal recognises the site includes a high flood risk area. They therefore propose a drainage design that should not increase flood risk. However, there is of course no certainty. This area is very sensitive to flooding. For two months last winter, the development area and downstream at Gravenhurst, Shillington and Campton were all under standing water. The river burst its banks in several places and roads needed to be closed. Sandbags were delivered by the Council and property was damaged, both vehicular and housing. Livestock fields were badly affected and the local woods, which form part of the conservation area were under water. If you feel that a development of this size upstream will only make matters worse, then you should say so and give a brief summary of your experiences.

- Do you have experiences of or concerns about flooding?
- Do you already need to make special arrangements for insurance for flooding?