

Response to CBC from Barton-Le-Clay Parish Council on planning application **CB/21/02409/OUT** Land East of Barton-le-Clay

Barton-le-Clay Parish Council **OBJECT** to the above application, for the following reasons:

- a) **Unwarranted use of Green Belt land.** Contrary to current adopted policies the application would seriously damage an important area of green belt through sprawl and encroachment into the countryside without justification. Central Beds & Luton Study 2017, and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework refer.
- b) **Premature, prior to final report from the Local Plan Inspectors.** Any decision on the proposals should be deferred and the application put on hold. It can only be properly determined once the full implications of the Inspectors' findings are applied and the Local Plan draft is consequently amended and adopted.
- c) **Poor location related to the layout of the adjoining parts of Barton-le-Clay.** There are very few ways to link the new and existing residential areas and integrate into the 'fabric' and layout of Barton-le-Clay. This leads to the development design being 'inward-facing' and somewhat isolated rather than combined with the existing parts of the village.
- d) **Not sustainable development.** There is a lack of shops, services and other facilities as part of the development, and poor off-site connections to the village for walking and cycling or support for other connections into Barton-le-Clay's shops and services. Public transport links to employment centres are extremely limited. Consequently, there is a primary focus on motor vehicle traffic for the needs of the development, thereby failing the sustainability criteria of planning policy.
- e) **Adversely impacts the character of the area including the Chilterns AONB.** Located within approx. 1km of the AONB, the development would significantly impact the setting and views contrary to protections afforded by relevant Planning Policies/law. Building heights proposed are up to 13m (3 storey) across a large part of the site and will be visually obtrusive and unacceptable. Not only does this affect the AONB, but the style will be out of keeping with the rest of Barton-le-Clay, being considerably more urban in style than existing developments. Nothing greater than 2 storey properties would be appropriate on the site. Other aspects of the design are grid/rectangular, doing nothing to blend with the natural curves of the rural landscape.
- f) **Contrary to policy DC5 in the Local Plan.** Unless the final outcome of the Local Plan inspection/process upholds the need to address unmet housing need, development of this site would be contrary to policy DC5 in the Local Plan which seeks to avoid the loss of good and versatile agricultural land.
- g) **Traffic volume, pressures and risks significantly underestimated.** It is considered that "real-world" traffic volumes generated by the development will be significantly higher than envisaged. This is due to the lack of onsite facilities, and of existing facilities within Barton-le-Clay – plus employment/leisure related journeys. Already there is major congestion into Luton and at Clophill at peak times. The road to Harlington station is extremely busy due to school transport (buses and cars). To Hitchin, the road is busy and precarious with frequent accidents. Other major developments such as the M1-A6

link road will massively exacerbate the problems of journeys to Luton from Barton-le-Clay, this proposal will make things even worse. More locally, the volume of traffic seeking to access the A6 from Higham Gobion Road will substantially increase and due to roundabout access priority being from Bedford, this will inevitably result in significant congestion on Higham Gobion Road between the development and A6 roundabout. With this congestion will come pollution, along with frustration and an associated increased risk of road traffic accidents.

Traffic flow in and around the site does also not appear to have been considered, with residents and visitors accessing/leaving the site at peak times resulting in grid-lock when meeting the traffic backed up from the A6 roundabout.

Further observations

Should Central Bedfordshire Council be minded to consider the application, the following concerns need to be addressed at the outline stage through amendments, conditions applied to any consent, and s.106 agreement covering issues which would otherwise render the scheme unacceptable – strain on services and facilities in Barton-le-Clay, including village centre parking:

- i. Ensure there's a substantial green buffer planted on the Higham Gobion Road frontage and around the edges of the site to 'soften' the urban edge, absorbing noise and to protect the view from the AONB.
- ii. The suggested layout and composition of the proposed scheme may be seen as inward looking and require a major review:
 - where key features are located; the recreational facilities for instance proposed within the site are shown furthest away from the existing village.
 - the composition of the scheme – the absence of services or facilities except for the new school; even the inclusion of a single convenience store would greatly reduce the need to travel into the village.
 - the suggested layout lacks an emphasis on non-car transport, which should become a central design theme if it is to be realistically intrinsic to the future lives of people who will live here.
 - The proposed lower/primary school position should be considered if this is to accommodate children travelling into the site, particularly in terms of traffic flow in and around the site. Clarity is required regarding any plans to move to a two-tier schooling system that would have greater impact on access and parking for the school.
- iii. Given the difficulty to properly integrate the scheme with the layout of nearby housing, the design therefore needs to improve non-car accessibility and to increase the sustainability in the lives of people who will be living here, to avoid a sense of isolation from the rest of the village.
- iv. The existing bus routes are limited, mainly north/south between Bedford and Luton. The bus service proposed is inadequate. A more frequent service provision, especially at peak times, should be offered. With the size of the development, an increase in public transport services should be considered, linking the village to Harlington, Flitwick and Hitchin where further public transport links are available.
- v. Seek a much better quality layout for the site than that shown on the illustrative masterplan – e.g. a central access spine through the site to help give the site a

distinctive character and appearance, and where footpaths and cycle paths have priority over road traffic.

- vi. Apply a styling which is much more akin to the “Dairy at Henlow” model, which was presented to village residents during the consultation process.
- vii. Avoid grids of houses which are unsympathetic to the surrounding rural landscape.
- viii. Consideration should be given to ensure roadways and pavements are adequate for residents to navigate the site safely. Ideally designed to incorporate proper roads and pavements, not follow the trend of flat, curbsless and pavementless roadways.
- ix. Substantially reduce the proportion/remove 3 storey buildings to reduce the sense of urbanisation and locate them so as minimise visual impact from the AONB.
- x. Consider the build phasing for the development, with properties closest to the existing dwellings to be built first to then shield these homes from ongoing noise and dust pollution from the rest of the site’s development. A review of the timings for the development works to also be undertaken to ensure this occurs outside anti-social hours of early morning or late night.
- xi. Give walking and cycling higher priority in terms of movement to achieve a more sustainable form of development with greater provisions to ensure the safety of people using the proposed walking and cycling routes, both along Higham Gobion Road and into the centre of Barton.
- xii. Introduce ‘place-making’ features within the site along the central spine e.g. on the school site frontage, and where the buses would stop / turn.
- xiii. Application should include infrastructure enabling electric vehicle charging for **all** dwellings, plus provision for visiting vehicles
- xiv. Include some commercial property to allow for a local convenience store and facilities within the site.
- xv. Retain the landscaped features on the northern and eastern sides of the site but review the location of the green space facilities within the development - allotments, BMX track, fitness and play facilities including a multi-use games area, so that they benefit the whole Village community, both existing and new residents. Consider upgrading and expansion to existing village facilities.
- xvi. The requirement for a net gain in habitat and bio-diversity will mean careful design of both buildings and landscaping to give nature as much chance as possible on this important ‘edge-of-settlement’ site.
- xvii. Address the issue of future management of the green space and recreational facilities provided within the site, with ownership and future costs offered to the Parish Council in the interests of all residents.
- xviii. Upgrade / widen the footpath along Higham Gobion Road from the site to Windsor Road and the centre of the village to include cycling.

- xix. Ensure there is a mix of housing with sufficient stock of 1 and 2 bed properties to meet the village needs. The local community should have access to the affordable / social housing on the site by considering a form of priority allocation consideration process to meet local needs for elderly, young singles / couples accommodation and for key workers like health workers or teachers.
- xx. Ameliorate the impact of a large increase in the village population through the s.106 agreement to improve facilities in Barton for:
- Social facilities such as the village hall and library
 - Community facilities such as the burial ground, village-centre car parking, adequate healthcare provision
 - Recreational facilities such as allotments, tennis courts, play equipment for all age groups, all-weather sports pitches, indoor sports facilities, and footpath / walks in the area.