

The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2018 – 2035

These comments are based on the affect the Local Plan will have on Chalton village, which, as you will see, I think is disproportional to its size and what it is being asked to sacrifice.

Settlement Envelopes (Page 106)

The plan states in Paragraph 9.2.5

There is a relationship between the settlement hierarchy and the application of Settlement Envelope policy, with the scale of development deemed appropriate being commensurate to the scale of settlement. Within small villages development will be limited to infill development, small-scale employment uses, and community facilities. Infill development can generally be defined as small-scale development for up to two dwellings in a small gap in an otherwise built up frontage, utilising a plot in a manner which should continue to complement the surrounding pattern and grain of development. There should be no adverse impact on the setting of the site, the character of the area, and surrounding properties and uses. High quality design principles will be applied and further detail is given in the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide.

In the case of Chalton Parish Council, this is clearly not the case. Chalton has taken a huge hit for land allocated within the Local Plan.

Chalton is classified within the plan as a Small Village, but the Land Grab for HRN1 and Chapel Farm is substantially more than the infill that Small Villages will be expected to take. Chapel Farm (NPL435) is 3.1836 hectares and is therefore significantly larger than the two house infill the plan suggests for Small Villages. This would provide somewhere in the region of 54 houses, which is a large increase (26.2%) from the current 206 approx. in the village today. This is without considering the number that HRN1 in Chalton Parish will provide, which is likely to add to the number of households by a factor of 4 approximately. The inclusion of Chapel Farm would mean another 2.2% of the Parish being taken, added to the 35% already taken, will push this up to over 37%. This amount of land given over to development is unprecedented and will not be matched by any other village, Small Village or otherwise. Given these figures, We see no justification in adding Chapel Farm to the Core Strategy.

Unfortunately, Central Beds Council has on a number of occasions failed to recognise certain developments are actually in Chalton Parish Councils area *. This is possibly the reason why they have chosen to allocate land to be considered at Chapel farm, Chalton, despite a huge land grab in the Parish for HRN1, the M1 J11a, the M1 – A5 Link Road, most of the Woodside Link Road, 10% of the proposed Rail Freight Terminal, 10% of the Chalgrave Manor Solar Farm. The land grab as a percentage of the Parish, all of which are within the Green Belt are listed as follows:

HRN1	22%
Vauxhall Sites NLP322 and NLP426	6%
Rail Freight Terminal	1%
Solar Farm	2%
Chapel Farm NLP435	2.2%
M1 J11a and By Pass	4%
TOTAL	37.2%

Many Chalton residents consider it odd that the draft plan can call for a development of 54 houses in the green belt when a recent application for 10 houses by Hill Crest on land adjacent to Chapel Farm was refused planning consent. One of the reasons given for refusal of the Hill Crest application was that the land lay within the green belt.

It is clear that the above developments will change Chalton Parish significantly. Substantial local infrastructure improvements including but not limited to additional primary school facilities, playground facilities, bus service improvements will all be required to meet the demands of a parish population which may double and ultimately treble when the current plans are fulfilled. Whilst the draft plan presents an overall optimistic vision it is the details and the long term affects of the resulting changes which matter most to Chalton Parish. Details which the plan has not made clear.

Parking (page 176)

The Local Plan suggests that parking spaces in the residential part of the development must have regard to the car parking standards set out in the Central Bedfordshire Council's Design Guide and Parking Strategy. This is not easy to locate, but just looking at new developments, you can see that there are too few car parking spaces allocated to each dwelling. The result is that residential streets are reduced to being linear car parks. This makes it difficult for access as the standards don't seem to be in touch with today's car ownership per household figures. Even 1 bedroom flats will need two spaces. More off-street parking will help with emergency vehicle access and other access.

Public Transport (page 177)

Sustainable Transport Provision

14.6.3 To achieve this, dominance of the car should be reduced, as supported by both the Manual for Streets and the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide while not impeding access for emergency vehicles and public transport. Opportunities to reduce traffic speeds and introduce level surface street designs for example may help to encourage more walking and cycling and create safer streets.

This statement from the plan shows that the Local Plan, along with most Transport Plans is all about trying to discourage car usage, despite this being unworkable for most people. As Central Bedfordshire is largely made up of rural villages and three moderately sized town, there is the typical rural issues with bus provision. Encouraging use of Public Transport will not work, despite all of the theoretical aspirations of CBC. If they are serious about Public Transport usage, there has to be adequate buses, at the right frequency and times to encourage people to leave their cars. Most people in villages do not live close to their place of work and buses do not travel frequently enough or fast enough.

Chalton Parish Council took part in a Taxi Voucher Scheme funded through a Bedfordshire County Council grant. This allowed the Parish Council to subsidise taxi journeys, subject to certain rules (namely frequency of claims, maximum payment and production of a receipt). This allowed resident who do not have access to a car to make important doctors and hospital appointments and other journeys. This is more efficient, as the money was spent on a journey that was actually needed, rather than a bus on a route not being sure if they will pick up any passengers. Rather than subsidising poorly used bus routes, this would be a better use of public money in the villages where the bus service is poor and therefore underused.

17.2.1 to 3 Section 106 (page 241)

Chalton Parish and Houghton Regis Town Councils will be providing the largest share of the development going forward, along with the amount Leighton Buzzards has already had taken. They would also be the main areas that provide Section 106 payments. There is a growing feeling that the money raised from CIL payments in a Parish should be allocated to that Parish first, rather than to other distant Parishes who have contributed significantly less land for development.

1. The 106 payment for two recent developments in Chalton (two industrial units to the north of the Vauxhall Spare Parts warehouse) was assessed at £40,000 and allocated to the Woodside Link Road. Chalton Parish Council was not consulted on the calculation of this amount, additionally there was no discussion on what infrastructure requirements would have been beneficial and in some cases necessary within the Parish. Considering the developments that will take place within Chalton Parish

boundary it is important that fully open discussions are held about the assessment and distribution of such payments.

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Central Beds Council failed to note that 10% of the area covered by planning application CD/14/01480, Chalgrave Manor Solar Farm was in Chalton Parish. The proposed visitor centre was also in Chalton Parish.

The lack of recognition continues as Central Beds Council recently failed to note that the Environment Agencies flood alleviation scheme at the southern end of HRN1 is in fact completely within the boundaries of Chalton Parish, a cause of much embarrassment to the Environment Agency and annoyance to Chalton Parish Council.