

# Leighton Linslade Churches

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26<sup>th</sup> May 2014

Planning Officer  
Central Bedfordshire Council  
Priory House  
Monks Walk  
Chicksands  
Shefford  
SG17 5TQ

Dear Sirs,

**Ref: Planning Application No CB/11/01937/OUT- CHAMBERLAINS BARN QUARRY**

Leighton Linslade Churches (LLC) representing Christian churches and groups in Leighton Linslade and the surrounding villages, totalling in excess of 3,000 residents, whilst in principle normally neither opposes nor supports new housing developments within and around Leighton Linslade, wishes to make the following comments regarding the above application:

The amended application appears to only relate to access and road design alterations and therefore it is assumed that there are no fundamental changes to the overall scheme particularly to any element that is essential in the ensuring that the neighbourhood is a place 'where people want to live, work and play'. This means that not only must the physical environment be a welcoming place but that for a cohesive and sustainable community to be created it is vital that facilities are available at the earliest stages to meet their social needs together with the appropriate funding where required.

Therefore it is essential that the scheme retains the inclusion of the provision of a Community House. This amenity will be a vital part of building a thriving and living community. It is however, vital that any Section 106 Agreement includes provision for the running costs for the House as well as the property itself, if it is to deliver real benefit to the community. The provision of a Community House must also be much earlier, at the very beginning (ie.0), in the development process rather than the 100<sup>th</sup> property being occupied, otherwise a considerable number of families will be without any form of facilities for a substantial period of time. Experience from the Sandhills development to the south of the town shows that whilst in theory a house may be provided in line with 100 properties being occupied, the timing of it actually being available for the community is considerably later. It also has to be accepted that a Community House is not an adequate substitute for a purpose-built facility in the longer term, as by its very nature it cannot provide the space or facilities of a purpose built hall.

It is also essential that there is an allowance for a community facility within the proposed lower school but is concerned that whilst there is mention of community facilities being included in the original proposal there is nothing substantive and that there is nothing proposed that would legally ensure that community facilities in the form of a hall are provided, the Section 106 outline agreement only referring to the provision of land for a school, payment towards education facilities (6.7) and a contribution towards general community facilities (6.8) which is a very broad 'catch all' heading.

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If community facilities are provided within the lower school, unless they are dedicated areas for community activities, they will not be available during school days or potentially during holiday periods and would be a compromise facility given the very different needs of a lower school to that of a community facility, for example basic equipment sizes and facilities such as toilets generally being smaller than adult ones.

Their provision will also be dependent on the local education authority actually building a school and as has already been seen on other developments within Leighton Linlade, specifically Sandhills, this cannot be guaranteed within any realistic timescale. There is no sustainable alternative provision (the Community House cannot be anything other than a short term solution) should the building of a school be deferred for a considerable period or shelved completely.

LLC is extremely concerned that there is no definitive statement relating to the retention of the Section 106 funding in any form that will ensure a legal commitment to community facilities that will support the ongoing needs and sustainability of the new community on this estate. Experience and evidence from the Sandhills (and Billington Park) demonstrates how vital these facilities are if the development is not to create isolated, disenfranchised and fragmented groups especially amongst young people and those less able to access transport alternatives. On its Planning page on Section 106, CBC cites *“the positive partnership between Central Bedfordshire Council, Bloor Homes and its engagement with the local community to bring about the development of over 100 new homes at Stanford Road, Shefford”*. LLC has seen no demonstrable evidence of any positive engagement with the local community on the provision of Community facilities for either Chamberlains Barn or Clipstone beyond the original displays and consultations which did not enable or facilitate any detailed discussions with those parts of the community who might be active users or contributors. It would appear that contrary to what is cited on their own website CBC appear to be adopting a policy of making decisions on a remote basis without any input or taking into account the needs of those who will most affected.

As there has been no definitive provision that will make the development ‘a place where people will WANT to live, work and play’ therefore ensuring a sustainable, thriving and living community, LLC objects to the application until there are further open consultations on community facilities.

We would also request that LLC is added to any future consultation groups list for this application, given the number and diversity of residents we represent, the breadth of our collective community outreach, and the experience of living in previous developments which we possess.

Yours faithfully,

  
On behalf of Leighton Linlade Churches