

CRANFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Affiliated to Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils

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Cranfield Parish Council Response to the consultation on the Barker Land Use Review

Dear Sir,

Cranfield Parish Council (the Council) is writing in response to the consultation above,

Background.

Cranfield is a village with a population of over 5000 people. This has expanded considerably in the last 30 years due to a large number of additional housing developments. The local infrastructure has become increasingly inadequate, and as a result a village poll was held in 1995 when the residents overwhelmingly rejected any further large scale housing development in the village.

Since that time, there have been a number of housing developments within the village, and the addition of a new supermarket. Currently there are approximately 70 dwellings with detailed planning permission or under construction.

Additionally there is a pending further large scale Greenfield housing development of over 350 houses with outline planning permission, as a result of inclusion of land in the adopted Mid Beds Local Plan. A further site for 375 houses is under planning appeal.

Cranfield is also increasingly used as a major traffic 'bypass route' by vehicles travelling to and from the M1 motorway and Milton Keynes.

As a result, the Council is opposed to all large scale housing developments in Cranfield due to the lack of a planned infrastructure capable of supporting the existing or projected population.

General comments

Globalisation is a word that is often heard and read these days. The usage of the term and its meaning is controversial. Additionally, not everyone accepts that globalisation is taking place. However, amongst those that do, Cochrane & Pain state that there is a consensus that the features of globalisation can be summarised under four main headings;

1. Stretched social relations across national boundaries.
2. Intensification of flows and networks of interaction across states. This means that events have more impact than before.
3. Interpenetration of economic and social practices. This is increased diversity caused by the extent that different cultures and societies come face to face.

4. A global infrastructure which allows globalised networks and institutions such as the IMF to operate.

(Cochrane & Pain p.15-17)

Therefore, globalisation relates to the economy, politics, culture and society in general. Cochrane & Pain further theorise that globalisation can be divided into three different positions; globalists, inter-nationalists and transformationalists. These are summarised below.

The main proponents of globalisation are the globalists. They believe that globalisation is a real force and is inevitable. Globalisation impacts everyone, and national cultures as well as politics and economies are being changed by global flows and by new structures. Globalists can be divided into optimists and pessimists. Optimistic globalists believe that the effect of globalisation is that living standards will increase for all, and culture sharing will result bring peoples closer together. The interchange of ideas will be beneficial and everyone will win.

Pessimistic globalists believe that larger societies and cultures will be the winners in globalisation, and more uniform societies will result. Losers in globalisation will be unskilled workers, women and members of the weaker societies whose cultural heritage will be lost. In addition, national sovereignty will be diminished.

The second group is inter-nationalists. These people believe that whilst there are changes taking place, the claims of the globalists have been exaggerated. They believe that similar interchanges of goods and cultures have been seen before. Powerful economic, political and trading groups such as the British Empire existed in the 19th century, so we are not seeing anything new. Different cultures and political systems, whilst changed, have remained distinctive.

The third group is the transformationalists. This approach also argues that the globalisation is not inevitable, and that the globalists have exaggerated their case and globalisation is not inevitable. Individual states are still powerful in economic, military and political senses.

It is not clear which context the government considers globalisation in respect of the planning system. However, the assumption must be that the planning system should create conditions that encourage economic growth, and enable cost competitiveness with other nations. This being the case, then the prime job of the planning system should be to provide adequate infrastructure (schools, roads, railways etc.) to enable sustainable growth to happen.

Response to questions in Annex 1.

1. The government has already consulted on PPS3. This seeks to allocate land based on a market led approach, such that an increase in prices, implying an increase in demand, would release more land for development. This will result in an imbalance in land supply between areas of differing economic growth and encourage increasingly large amounts of land to be built up in areas such as the South East.

The implication of a requirement for greater flexibility in planning is in question 1. This suggests land provision should be based upon demand and not need. This fails to adequately take into account the requirements of the existing local population.

In order to provide the right development in the right place, emphasis must be placed upon investing in adequate infrastructure such as roads, public transport facilities, education etc. in advance of development.

2. In determining regional provision much more co-operation between local authorities must be encouraged. Cranfield is 5 miles from Milton Keynes, which is earmarked for large scale housing, but this does not appear to be taken into account when housing policy is being made. Cranfield is in Bedfordshire, and as such under a different planning authority. Yet, many people commute from Cranfield to Milton Keynes to work, shop and for leisure (e.g. theatres, parks). More consultation must be encouraged with town and parish councils such as Cranfield Parish Council who are situated on the boundary of sub-regional areas.

Cranfield Parish Council does not feel it is adequately consulted or its views taken into account in the provision of land for development. Town and parish councils are often in a position to understand local needs more easily than other bodies, such as GoEast who are seen as unaccountable and remote, and merely carry out national government policy with little regard to local sensibilities. Local people and town and parish councils are often much better placed to understand the inadequacies of the local infrastructure.

3. The current system does not adequately account for natural resource usage. Guidelines on the use of previously developed land are too vague and allow planning authorities to weigh decision making criteria in too broad a fashion. Where there is a brownfield site locally, this should preferably be developed before the Greenfield alternative, subject to specific local circumstances and conditions. Clear targets for brownfield development need to be enforced on a local basis.

Sustainable development can only take place where there is adequate infrastructure. Additionally, on a local level, growth is only sustainable when it takes place in a way that does not promote over expansion.

Lack of infrastructure increases opposition to further housing, which directly contradicts the Government's aim to increase housing supply.

From a social viewpoint, this council believes that the current system does not adequately take into account the existing population's needs.

4. In other countries such as France, Germany & Switzerland, investment in modern infrastructure such as a well maintained high speed and reliable railway system has been made. Good infrastructure reduces the costs to industry and helps competitiveness.

5. The proposal for the Planning Gain Supplement made by the government will help to make the cost of building easier to calculate in advance. This will make development costs easier to estimate accurately.

6. This council believes that the system is not sufficiently 'joined up' for villages such as Cranfield where it is on the border of different sub-regions, in this case being very close to Milton Keynes which is under a different planning authority.

7. This council's experience is that there pressure from developers on the planning authority to speed up the passage of large developments. This does not allow for sufficient consultation time, and encourages planning permission to be pushed through without adequate thought into the details. In other words, it penalises good detail planning.

The best way to speed up the process is for proper infrastructure to be planned before the developments reach the detailed planning stage. For example, a large scale housing development has been under discussion for over a decade in Cranfield. (Home Farm, Mid Beds Policy H08 26(A), Mid Beds local plan) There is

still no adequate detailed planned infrastructure, particularly regarding the lower school.

The question regarding 'improving the speed and efficiency' of the planning appeal system implies that the government feel it is too slow. This suggests that the purpose of this review is to force through more development, more quickly. This is the wrong approach if sustainable development is to be encouraged. The emphasis must be on the local planning authority to understand the local context of a planning application. It must not be left to a planning inspector to override local planning considerations.

It cannot be emphasised enough that adequate infrastructure before development encourages sustainable growth, and removes a lot of the local opposition which slows down planning applications.

8. The council does not believe that the cost of a planning application is a deterrent.

9. Perfect competition is possible when there are many buyers and sellers and buyers cannot influence prices. They are all price takers. At the moment the costs of development will vary depending upon land prices, 106 agreements etc. The proposed Planning Gain Supplement will help to make costs clearer and reduce variation between regions.

Theoretically, a competitive market should reach equilibrium, and supply rise to meet demand at the market price. This is one area where national government could help if a national database of land allocated for use, for sale or with planning permission could be provided.

Note that this council believes that it is not desirable for a demand based system of land allocation, so it is unlikely equilibrium could be reached.

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12. Planning authorities can help in promoting sustainable economic development. However, this council's experience with Mid Beds District Council is that the planning department is in the main reactive to proposals put to them by developers, and not pro-active in bringing together communities and prospective developers to make forward plans to ensure long term sustainable economic growth. There needs to be more emphasis on planning authorities to do this. The LDF may help to improve this situation. It is recognised that there is a cost associated with forward planning, which should be met from national government funds.

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14. The main incentive for communities such as Cranfield to accept further development is the provision of adequate infrastructure, such as roads and education. Additionally the Planning Gain Supplement should be used to give local people the opportunity to decide on local facility provision.

15. Again, planning can strengthen economic performance by the provision of adequate infrastructure.

Copy: Mrs Nadine Dorries MP (Mid Bedfordshire)

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