



The countryside charity
Bedfordshire

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30th March 2022

Dear Sirs

**Request for Call -in of Central Bedfordshire Council Planning Application
CB/21/04809/REG3
Location: Land off Fordfield Road Steppingley
Proposal: Erection of a Crematorium and ancillary facilities**

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) have resolved to approve the above application and have submitted this to you. It is a proposed development in the Green Belt, on land owned by CBC, who also propose to fund and operate the facility.

We would urge you to call -in this application as we believe it raises issues of National Importance, sets planning precedents which will adversely impact on Green Belt land and should be determined by an independent Inspector. We have attached our latest objection to this application.

Our reasons for this call -in request are as follows: -

The Proposal is contrary to CBC's Adopted Local Plan

Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (2021) was only recently adopted on 23/7/2021. The Site is not allocated for development within the Plan. The Case Officer when considering the subject application stated that this site was

"Excluded from the Local Plan process because of the potential coalescence between Ampthill and Flitwick. That decision is a material consideration in regard to any development proposal at this site."

CBC made no effort to identify this site or indeed any site for a Crematorium during the Local Plan process despite what they claim is a pressing need for this County wide infrastructure facility.

The Site is within the Green Belt and there are no Very Special Circumstances to justify development

Not only is the site unallocated within the Local Plan it is located outside of a defined Settlement Envelope, set within open countryside, and falls within the Green Belt.

CBC carried out a number of Green Belt studies to inform the Local Plan process. This site was considered at an early stage but as stated above, was excluded due to concerns over *the potential coalescence between Ampthill and Flitwick*.

Paras 2.11 – 2.13 of the Case Officer's covering report identifies that the proposal is

Inappropriate Development;

Would result in significant harm to the openness of the area in both a spatial sense and a visual sense;

Would not accord with two of the five Green Belt objectives, namely objective (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another (where moderate harm would occur); and objective (c) protection against encroachment of development into the open countryside (where significant harm would occur).

Despite this CBC have made their own decision, based on their Needs Assessment, that they can demonstrate there are Very Special Circumstances (VSC) which override National Green Belt policy.

We are aware that other applications have been determined on Appeal allowing planning permission for crematorium developments on Green Belt land. These however appear to be bespoke decisions after careful consideration of the specific circumstances. Here CBC are making broad statements which set a dangerous precedent for further erosion of the Green Belt across the Country.

CBC removed around 420 acres of land from the Green Belt as part of the recent Local Plan Review and have recently granted planning permission on an unallocated Green Belt site for a food store - we need to protect what is left.

The Role of CBC

Whilst it is not unusual for a Local Authority to be the Landowner and Planning Authority. In this case CBC are also the Funder, Developer and Operator of the facility. They are setting precedents for ignoring their own recently adopted Local Plan and what constitutes VSC to justify Green Belt development. Other objectors have commented on the fact that CBC is also including provisions in its budget for the facility before a planning decision has been made.

For all these reasons we consider the application should be considered by an Independent third party and request the application is called- in.

Yours faithfully

Susan Lynch

Susan Lynch
CPRE Bedfordshire

cc N Dorris MP for Mid Bedfordshire
A Selous MP for SW Bedfordshire