

Chalfont St Peter village threatened with high-density housing plan

26th August 2009

- Chalfont St Peter expected to find space for up to 802 new homes
- 406 planned for estate on Holy Cross convent site in village centre
- Population could increase rapidly by more than 12%
- No effective consultation with local residents
- Work could start in 2010

The picturesque and ancient village of Chalfont St. Peter in Buckinghamshire - regularly voted one of the most desirable places to live in the UK - could be changed radically under plans by Chiltern District Council to build 720 or more new homes, many as part of a high density housing estate.

Central government's Local Development Framework has ordered that 2700 new homes be built in the Chiltern District over the next 17 years. Chiltern District Council has decided that 720 of these have to be in Chalfont St. Peter, although sites for 802 potential new homes have been identified.

If plans by Chiltern District Council go ahead then a housing estate with 406 new homes could be built on the historic Holy Cross Convent School site in Chalfont St Peter. This development would completely fill in the ancient heart of the village centre with high density dwellings and have a dramatic effect on the character of the popular Village. Work on the new homes could start as soon as next year.

In addition to the 406 homes on the Holy Cross Convent site, over 200 are targeted for the vacant Newland Park site, 28 in Nortoft Road, 95 in the Austenwood and Gold Hill area and 73 in Chalfont St Peter North.

Chalfont St Peter residents' views will not be recognised by Chiltern District Council, as residents are not considered as 'stakeholders' to the scheme. However, Chalfont St Peter Parish Council, led by Chairman Cllr. Richard Allen, has set up a Working Group to analyse and respond officially and on behalf of residents to the many hundreds of pages of documents that are already in existence surrounding the plans.

Cllr Allen stated "Of course, with a shortage of housing for younger people we are not opposed to the kind of sustainable affordable housing proposals that have been put forward for Penn and Seer Green. However I am very concerned that residents do not seem to realise either the scale of what is being proposed or the fact that housing densities will be applied on the basis that we are a Town. Chalfont St Peter residents have not had a real opportunity to comment on plans that are already a long way towards ratification in the Spring of 2010. The high density of housing proposed could put huge environmental pressures on the village and may even change the village beyond all recognition – not necessarily for the better"

The Working Group is creating a Village Design Statement and Plan to take in all aspects of the proposed development, including environmental issues such as water, sewerage and drainage as well as the additional load on public services that the extra homes will create. Education, traffic and medical facilities are already the source of debate and any additional homes will make all these issues more severe. The excellence of Chalfont St Peter's schools attracts families from all over the country, but most of the schools are full and extra capacity will be needed to accommodate the additional children.

Cllr. John Hatton who is leading the Working Group commented: "The Parish Council is not opposed to development in the village indeed we realise that it is necessary and inevitable but we need to ensure that any development is done in sympathy with the existing village character and should take into consideration all aspects of living here including the basic everyday utilities. Additionally any new building should to be in keeping with the character of the village and must not detract from the excellent environment that we have now. It would be a shame if we have to concrete over the Holy Cross playing fields and lose ancient trees. Our plan, which will take several months to prepare, is expected to try to retain at least some of this beautiful open space. We are due to meet with CDC to discuss this in early September. Any residents who are willing to commit some time are welcome to become involved".

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