

## **Colchester Borough Council: Local Plan Issues & Options Consultation – Submission by Suzanne Whitworth, [REDACTED]**

It is noted that the Borough Council is preparing a new local plan to accommodate the Borough's growth requirements to 2032, and that a very challenging target of 1,065 dwellings per annum is currently being considered, which would amount to approximately 16,000 dwellings over the 15 year plan period.

This would significantly increase the provision made in the adopted Core Strategy (830 dwellings per annum), which has previously required greenfield land to be released, including the loss of sports facilities and open spaces in the North Colchester area, placing greater pressure on existing provision.

If increased levels of housing is proven to be necessary, and noting that the Consultation Paper envisages further development in and around the urban area of Colchester, it is vital for the proper planning of the area that the spatial strategy adopts the following approach;

- ❖ Provides policy protection for the Borough's existing sports facilities and open spaces;
- ❖ Provides policy protection (and particular weight) to sites fulfilling a strategic sports need, such as the Mill Road Sports Ground in North Colchester;
- ❖ Identifies existing open spaces which make an important contribution to the open character of the area, as 'Visually Important Open Spaces' which are required to be kept open and undeveloped – it is considered that the Mill Road Sports Ground fulfils this policy criteria, noting that the loss of open spaces, continued urban encroachment and a lack of accessible open spaces in the Myland area warrant VIOS protection for this site;
- ❖ Housing is not developed on existing sport and open space facilities which fulfil an ongoing need;

I have previously outlined the ongoing need for the Mill Road Site to be retained for sport and recreation purposes, and my earlier representation to the Colchester Northern Gateway Consultation in September 2014 is attached as background, and ought to be taken into account in the preparation of the Preferred Options stage of the Plan.

### **Local Plan Themes – Housing, Promoting Healthy Communities, Natural Environment & Growth Options & Development Strategy**

All of these themes reinforce the need for safeguarding existing and making suitable additional provision for open space, sport and recreation areas and facilities to meet the

existing and forecast needs of the current population and sports clubs, as well as the new population arising.

If the preferred growth and development strategy considers that the further development of the Colchester urban area is necessary to provide land to meet part of the Borough's housing needs, then this ought to be carefully balanced with the need to ensure that the Borough's existing open space/ sports/ recreation areas and facilities are afforded a high level of policy protection, particularly those assets that are highly accessible to existing communities by foot and cycle such as the Mill Road Sports Ground.

The content of this submission is therefore applicable to Questions 8, 9, 10, 17, 18, 19, 26, 27 and 28.

It is requested that the Plan Making priorities for North Colchester take full account of the points made in this submission, and I appreciate the opportunity to input into this process.

26<sup>th</sup> February 2015