



## **Colchester Borough Council : Local Plan Issues & Options Consultation – Submission on Behalf of the Colchester Gladiators American Football Club & Eastern Rhinos Rugby League Club**

- 1) This submission is made on behalf of the Colchester Gladiators American Football Club (CG) and Eastern Rhinos Rugby League Club (ER).
- 2) CG and ER are both established and thriving local sports clubs who are based at the Mill Road Sports Ground in Colchester, and who have an ongoing need to utilise, consolidate and further develop their use of the Mill Road Site, a strategic sports facility serving multiple sports activities and organisations in the North Colchester area.

### **Local Plan Vision**

#### **Housing & Sport Facilities**

- 3) CG and ER acknowledge that the Borough Council is preparing a new local plan to accommodate the Borough's growth requirements to 2032, and note that a very challenging target of 1,065 dwellings per annum (15,975 units over 15 years) is currently being suggested.
- 4) This would amount to a significant increase over the adopted Core Strategy target of 830 dwellings per annum, which has already resulted in the loss of sports facilities and open spaces in the North Colchester area, and a reduction in sports pitch capacity.
- 5) It is therefore important that if this increased level of housing is proven to be necessary, and if the focus of development is to remain in and around the urban area of Colchester, that appropriate protection is put in place for the Borough's existing sports facilities and open spaces, particularly strategic sports facilities that meet an ongoing need such as the Mill Road Sports Ground.

#### **Ongoing Need To Retain the Mill Road Sports Ground**

- 6) The potential relocation of Colchester Rugby Club (CRFC) to a site north of the A12 has no bearing in sport and recreation terms, on the need to retain the Mill Road Site for multiple sport related activities and recreation as outlined below.
- 7) In summary CG require 2 x full size pitches including a floodlit main pitch and separate training area and youth and junior pitches. ER has two senior teams plus U13, U15, U17 teams and a ladies rugby league team, and require 2 x full size pitches, youth and junior pitches and a separate training area.



- 8) Both CG and ER require clubhouse, storage and car parking facilities to ensure that the clubs can continue to function on a financially viable basis, and to enable player and match official welfare and spectator commitments to be properly met.
- 9) It is also understood that the Colchester Cavaliers Cricket Club have two teams now playing in the Essex Two Counties and Piri Piri North Essex Leagues, as well as an evening league team format. The Cavaliers are based at Mill Road and have a requirement for 2 x cricket pitches at this location including pavilion, changing room/ shower facilities and car parking.
- 10) CG also has a cricket team who would ideally wish to utilise the facilities at Mill Road, if feasible.

### **Local Plan Themes – Housing & Promoting Healthy Communities**

- 11) The Issues & Options Consultation acknowledges the thrust of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to ensure that the planning system plays an important role in providing safe, accessible places for social interaction and physical activity to contribute to healthy lifestyles. This is essential to provide for existing and proposed sustainable housing areas.
- 12) With this in mind, it is considered to be of tantamount importance that the Borough Councils' sport and recreation strategy maintains and invests in existing sports facilities meeting a proven sports and recreational need (such as Mill Road) and affords them appropriate protection in the new local plan – the Mill Road Sports Ground should therefore be identified as an existing sports facility to be retained for that purpose, irrespective of the potential relocation of the rugby club.
- 13) CG and ER consider that this submission responds to how the emerging Plan should address the 'housing' and 'healthy community' issues and considerations arising, and is relevant to Questions 15, 16, 18 and 19 of the Issues and Options Consultation, and request that it is reported as such.
- 14) A copy of the CG earlier representations to the Colchester Northern Gateway Consultation in October 2014 is also attached for information, and provides background to the club.
- 15) Please take these points into account in preparing the Preferred Options Stage of the new local Plan.

25<sup>th</sup> February 2015