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**COLCHESTER EXAMINATION**  
**MAIN MATTERS 9 & 10**

**SUSTAINABLE SETTLEMENTS**  
**AND OTHER VILLAGES**  
**& COUNTRYSIDE**

April 2021

## **Introduction**

1. This Statement examines the Proposals and Policies for the Borough's villages and assesses if they can be sufficiently improved to provide a more robust basis for the future delivery of village housing. The contents of this Statement are without prejudice to the radical changes advocated in our separate Statement form Main Matter 2 addressing Policy SG1: Colchester's Spatial Strategy and SG2: Housing Delivery and which identified the need for a wholly different approach to the Spatial Hierarchy in order to secure sustainable development.

## **Context**

2. The Spatial Hierarchy of Settlements found in Policy SG1 and Table SG1 divides the Borough's villages into three categories: Sustainable Settlements, Other Villages and Countryside. As noted in our separate Statement relating to Policy SG1, the list of Sustainable Settlements also contains urban settlements (eg: West Mersea), whilst all the villages defined as Sustainable Settlements have a Proposals Map defining a Sustainable Settlement Boundary. All Sustainable Settlements apart from one are governed by individual Policies within the range SS1-SS15. The exception is Dedham which is governed by Policy OV1: Other Villages. All the Other Villages are provided with Proposals Maps defining Other Village Boundaries and are governed by Policy OV1.
3. The settlement boundaries on the Policies Maps are shown by means of a solid line in the case of Sustainable Settlements and a pecked line in the case of Other Villages.
4. With regard to the Countryside category, this relates to *"very small villages/hamlets and isolated clusters of dwellings"* which are neither listed nor provided with Policies Maps but are governed by Policy OV2.
5. The new suite of policies and proposals for the Borough's villages will supersede those within the Colchester Core Strategy which has operated since December 2008.

## **Settlement Boundaries**

6. Certain villages will lose their long-established settlement boundary - and this raises the question as to whether this is justified. Core Strategy Settlement Boundaries are proposed to be removed from the following villages:-

Aldham - Ford Street

Birch – Hardy's Green

Boxted - Workhouse Hill and Mill Road

Chappel – Swan Street

Dedham - Lamb Corner

Dedham - Bargate Lane/Long Road

Layer de la Haye - Malting Green only

Layer Marney - Smythes Green

Little Tey

Wakes Colne - Middle Green and Halstead Road.

7. Here, we particularly query the justification for the removal of Malting Green from Layer de la Haye's settlement boundary as Malting Green is a significant composite part of this Sustainable Settlement. Its reinstatement in Policies Map SS10 is therefore requested.
8. We also note that the existing settlement boundaries for the above villages have proved popular in the past and could easily be retained within the Section 2 Plan. Indeed, the size of many of the above settlements is comparable with smaller Other Villages such as Easthorpe, Great Wigborough and Mount Bures which do have settlement boundaries with their own OV1 Policies Maps. There is no clear justification for providing certain Other Villages with OV1 Policies Maps whilst not providing the same for villages of similar size.
9. Assigning settlements to the Countryside category places an extra constraint on achieving any further village housing because whilst Policy OV2 would still enable these villages to deliver "*small scale rural exception sites*", (and is to be supported in that respect), it does not sanction any infilling or rounding-off sites. It is advocated below under Policy OV2: Countryside that the wording of this policy should permit minor infilling and rounding-off in addition to rural exception sites. This would no doubt be welcomed by these small communities where maintaining the vitality and viability of their villages is still an important social objective.
10. We now separately deal with the proposed loss of settlement boundaries and other matters relating to Dedham below.

### **Dedham & Dedham Heath**

11. The Plan creates an anomalous situation whereby Dedham is categorised as a Sustainable Settlement but is not provided with its own Policy in line with all the other Sustainable Settlements, instead being governed by Policy OV1 as if categorised as an Other Village. The Dedham and Dedham Heath OV1 Policy Map is nevertheless included alphabetically

within the other SS Policies Maps. The OV1 Policy Map for Dedham and Dedham Heath then defines a Sustainable Settlement Boundary (solid) for Dedham and an Other Village Boundary (pecked) for Dedham Heath. The "justification" is found in paragraphs 14.152 - 14.156.

12. It is submitted there is little logic in treating Dedham under the terms of Policy OV1. It is listed as a Sustainable Settlement in Policy SG1 whilst the text in paragraph 14.241 defines Other Villages as: "...small villages" - which clearly cannot apply to Dedham as one of the larger well-served villages in the Borough. Whatever grounds there may be for constraining development in and around Dedham, it is illogical and confusing on the one hand to place Dedham in one category in the Spatial Hierarchy and then apply a policy relating to a different category on the other. Moreover, as noted above, the Dedham and Dedham Heath's OV1 Policy Map denotes a solid Sustainable Settlement Boundary for Dedham rather than a pecked Other Village Boundary which would apply in the case of Other Villages, (including Dedham Heath), and this is again anomalous. In any event, it is submitted that there should be no need to apply Policy OV1 to Dedham which is safeguarded by its Sustainable Settlement Boundary and a full array of countryside and AONB protection policies which should prove amply sufficient to ward off undesirable growth.
13. With regard to the unique status being afforded Dedham, we also note there is no exception made referring to Dedham in Policy SG2 Housing Delivery which states: *"...an appropriate level of development will be brought forward in Sustainable Settlements to support new homes and economic and social development"*. Negating this, paragraph 14.154 states: *"...no growth has been planned for Dedham village during the plan period."*
14. Dedham and Dedham Heath have a close geographical and functional inter-relationship such that both could be recognised as Sustainable Settlements with their Sustainable Settlement Policies Map as for all other Sustainable Settlements. It is also possible to draw a close comparison between the proximity of Dedham and Dedham Heath to that of other Sustainable Villages which have two or more settlement boundaries, namely Copford & Copford Green (Policy SS4), Eight Ash Green (Policy SS5), Fordham (Policy SS6), Great Horkesley (Policy SS7), Langham (Policy SS9), and Marks Tey (Policy SS11). It therefore makes more sense to promote Dedham Heath into the Sustainable Settlement category alongside Dedham. We therefore suggest modifications should be made to reflect this more logical approach.
15. Finally, the proposed removal of settlement boundaries for Dedham - Lamb Corner and Dedham - Bargate Lane/Long Road is referred to in paragraphs 14.152 and 14.156. As the purpose of settlement boundaries is to provide a clear delineation for the extent of development and to protect the countryside, the arguments point to the need to maintain settlement boundaries rather than remove them - especially in and on the edge of an AONB. It is therefore considered that these two small settlements should be included in the list of Other Villages and their existing settlement boundaries retained as Other Village

Boundaries. This might then provide a possible small reservoir for future village housing to off-set the limitations places on new housing in Dedham.

## **Countryside**

16. Turning finally to Policy OV2: Countryside, we support the ability to deliver small scale rural exception sites outside defined settlement boundaries - the wording providing some greater flexibility compared to Policy H4 in the Core Strategy which required such sites to be *"contiguous with village settlement boundaries"*. This will also enable Countryside villages to deliver some exception site affordable housing if appropriate as well as small scale infilling or rounding-off if the proposed amendment to the wording of Policy OV2 mentioned in paragraph 9 above proves acceptable.
17. The final sentence of Policy OV2 is controversial, however, as it should not be delegated to Parish Councils to veto an exception site proposal. Their views will be one of many considerations that need to be weighed in the balance by the Planning Authority. A modification is therefore suggested to replace the wording with: *"The views of the Parish Council will be taken into account in terms of the need for and location of any proposals for rural exception housing."*

## **Suggested Modifications**

- Re-instate a Sustainable Settlement boundary for Malting Green (Layer de la Haye) on Proposals Map SS10.
- Review the case for categorising the following settlements as Other Villages and provide them with an Other Village Boundary where appropriate:-

Aldham - Ford Street

Birch – Hardy's Green

Boxted - Workhouse Hill and Mill Road

Chappel – Swan Street

Dedham - Lamb Corner

Dedham - Bargate Lane/Long Road

Layer de la Haye - Malting Green only

Layer Marney - Smythes Green

Little Tey

Wakes Colne - Middle Green and Halstead Road.

- Remove Dedham from being subject to Policy OV1 but maintain its categorisation as a Sustainable Settlement in Policy SG1.
- Transfer Dedham Heath from the Other Village category to a Sustainable Settlement in Policy SG1 to appear as "Dedham and Dedham Heath" - with a combined Policies Map as at present but showing both with a Sustainable Settlement Boundary.
- Include a new SS Policy for Dedham and Dedham Heath as for all the other Sustainable Settlements.
- Amend the first sentence of the last paragraph in Policy OV2: Countryside to read: *"Residential development in small settlements in the countryside, outside settlement boundaries, will be restricted to minor infilling and rounding-off sites and to small scale rural exception sites to meet affordable housing needs."*
- Amend the last sentence of the last paragraph in Policy OV2: Countryside to read: *"The views of the Parish Council will be taken into account in terms of the need for and location of any proposals for rural exception housing".*

18. It is respectfully requested that the above suggested modifications are supported in order to improve the soundness of the Section 2 Local Plan.

**Edward Gittins FRTPI**

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