

Colchester Borough Local Plan 2017 - 2033 - Section 2 Examination

Main Matter 10 - Other Villages and Countryside (Policies OV1 and OV2)

“Are the policies for Other Villages and Countryside justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national guidance, and local context, including the meeting the requirements of the CLP 1”?

On behalf of the respondents, Barkley Projects LLP (REP 6833), Pomery Planning Consultants made representations objecting to Policy SS10, Layer de La Haye, whilst promoting an alternative or additional site on the edge of the settlement. Were this alternative site not to be included in the Plan, the opportunity to bring forward what would be a sustainable and not isolated housing development on the edge of the settlement, would not be possible in the light of Policy OV2 in its current form.

Policy OV2

The policy as currently drafted is not in conformity with the Framework, in particular, Paragraphs 78 and 79 (previously para 55), which only seek to prevent isolated homes in the countryside. Policy OV2, effectively places a blanket restriction on new housing in rural areas beyond defined settlement boundaries.

Paragraph 14.238 of the supporting text to OV2, declares that *“Furthermore, residential development in the countryside would be functionally isolated”*. This is a sweeping statement and would not be the case in a number of situations on the edges of some of the Borough’s other villages. Many such villages contain a good range of services and good bus services. Policy OV2 lacks any flexibility to consider small housing proposals on the edges of existing settlements, which can enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. The policy, in contradiction of paragraph 78 of the Framework, fails to identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this would or could support local services. Policy OV2 is more restrictive than the policies in the current development plan. Extant Policies SD1 and H1, which were revised in 2014 to bring them in to conformity with the Framework, seek to direct development to the most sustainable locations, whilst protecting the countryside and ensuring that housing is accessible and environmentally sustainable.

Policy OV2 as drafted, is considered to be a step backwards and fails to adhere to national planning guidance.

It is noted that the LPA propose a minor modification to Policy OV2, which is proposed to *“better align with national view of rural residential development.”* This modification does not go far enough to reflect national policy and the terminology used as the reason for the modification, suggests a reluctance to embrace national policy on rural housing. The Framework does not put forward a “view” on rural residential policy, it puts forward the policy on such areas, policy which local planning authorities are expected to follow when preparing development plan documents.

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