

EXAMINATION OF THE COLCHESTER BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2017-2033 – SECTION 2 EXAMINATION

MAIN MATTER 17– POLICIES DM17 TO DM19 – RETENTION OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION FACILITIES, PROVISION OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND PRIVATE AMENITY SPACE

ON BEHALF OF HOPKINS HOMES

WORD COUNT: 481



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Question 1 - Are the policies that relate to the Retention of Open Space and Recreation Facilities, Provision of Public Open Space and Private Amenity Space justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national guidance, and local context, and CLP 1?

- 1.1 Hopkins Homes previously objected to policy DM19. The concerns raised in this objection have not been amended by the submission version of the Plan or subsequent modifications proposed by the Council.
- 1.2 Given that this element of the policy remains unchanged, Hopkins Homes repeats its previous concerns raised regarding the overly prescriptive elements contained within this policy, as it does not allow for flexibility as recommended by the Essex Design Guide (EDG). For example, the EDG acknowledges that communal amenity space may not be necessary where apartments have 5sq.m balconies and are located in proximity to open space. It also may not be practicable to provide communal amenity space of 25sq.m for apartments located within a town centre or part of a mixed-use development. Consequently, the supporting text to Policy DM19 should be updated to provide greater flexibility for applicants and decision makers when applying this policy to individual applications.
- 1.3 Furthermore, the Council has not provided evidence to justify its approach to this policy. The NPPF emphasises on making the most effective and efficient use of land and avoid building homes at low densities where there is a shortage of land for meeting identified housing requirements. Policy DM19 rigid approach could restrict the delivery of new homes by requiring private open spaces of a specific size with no evidence to support this requirement. Therefore, the Council needs to provide justification and take local circumstances into account as per the EDG.
- 1.4 In conclusion, the blanket application of these standards has still not been justified by the Council, and the consequential effectiveness of the Plan has not been demonstrated. The blanket application of the standards raises the potential to artificially limit the development yield of sites with a consequential impact on the ability to meet the development needs established by the Plan.

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- 1.5 Hopkins Homes maintains its suggested remedy to the objections raised and recommends the additional of the following text to Policy DM19:

"Variations to these standards must be supported by a strong urban design case that justifies why some units within a development cannot meet the required standards."