

MATTER 2 Sustainable Growth Policies - Submission by STOP 350

Introduction

This Hearing Statement has been prepared by Stop350 and should be read in conjunction with the representations made to the Publication Draft Plan 2017.

Stop350 is a community based group that arose because of concerns about the CLP. Stop350 is authorised by individuals to act on their behalf. These representations come from over 1,100 people formed by a combination of residents of Mersea Island and close surrounding area.

We support sustainable development and recognise the need to plan for appropriate growth. We are engaging in the examination process in a constructive manner and appreciate that our role is to assist the Inspectors in deciding whether the CLP is Sound and, where necessary, to identify how the CLP could be made to be Sound.

In light of the regrettable significant passage of time between the consultation on the Publication Draft Plan and the Examination – some 4 years – we have updated the evidence which we rely upon in assisting the Inspectors in examining the CLP. This is set out where relevant in our statement.

Response to Inspectors Main Matters, Issues and Questions

- ***Is Colchester's spatial strategy and the distribution of development as set out in Policy SG1 supported by robust and up to date evidence and otherwise soundly based?***

This policy makes the assumption that the second tier areas are sustainable. No proper explanation is given for why these areas are found to be sustainable other than by having a “*large population and a concentrations of jobs, facilities services and function.*” para. 12.9 CLP.

In Para. 12.12 it states “*The settlements highlighted in bold in Table SG1 have active Neighbourhood Plan working groups which have chosen to pursue site allocations through their respective Neighbourhood Plans under the Localism Act 2011. More detailed proposals for site allocations and other policy matters are set out in the Neighbourhood Plan for these areas.*” This includes West Mersea, however the LCP actually allocated the sites for West Mersea.

We contend that the West Mersea was not properly assessed. These reasons are laid out in the various Matters we now bring forward, this is additional and updated material to our original submission in August 2017.

Response to Inspectors Main Matters, Issues and Questions

- ***Are the retail policies (SG5, SG6 and SG6a) of CLP Section 2 which relate to Centre Hierarchy, Town Centre Uses and Local Centres justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national guidance, and local context, including CLP Section 1?***

Centre Hierarchy.

There is no mention of the single flood-able road cul-de-sac access to West Mersea which makes it more remote and difficult to access at times. Tourism can be help the local economy however it can also create traffic issues for local residents and businesses trying to access the Island at times of high tides (see details laid out in other Matters).

This policy requires the District Centres such as West Mersea to have the necessary Infrastructure to support itself and the surrounding area.

Mersea Island being a Cul-de-sac accessed by single flood-able road, it is difficult to understand how West Mersea can be a sustainable centre of the spoke in the hub. West Mersea as a centre is totally reliant on vehicular access to district centre some 12 to 15 Kilometres away where all the larger shops and main entrainment and sporting facilities are provided. It should be noted that the expansion of Colchester northwards, with cinemas and sporting activities, to the north side of the A12 makes the vehicular access some 19Km through the centre of Colchester or 25Km if going around using the outer roads.

It is likely that the smaller villages around, apart from East Mersea being on the Island, will tend to use the more accessible facilities in and around Colchester's southern side and Town centre.

We have a single large Primary school but no secondary education is provided on the Island so all some 400 plus secondary age children have to be bused off the Island to either Colchester catchment school of Thomas Lord Auderley some 12Km, or to Tiptree school of Thurstable some 19Km for which parents have to pay the bus fare.

Elsewhere in our objection is much evidence showing the difficulties faced by the residents of Mersea Island and as laid out in our already submitted documentation of August 2017.

NPPF Para. 10 requires plans and decisions to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.

Again in NPPF Para . 17 it sets out 12 principles that should underpin the plan-making and decision-making.

We contend the LP does not follow or meet these criteria and we show much evidence in the other Matters to support this view.

Response to Inspectors Main Matters, Issues and Questions

- ***Does CLP Section 2 Policy SG7 provide a clear indication of how a decision maker should secure the necessary infrastructure provision to meet Colchester's economic growth requirements for the plan period?***

We do not believe West Mersea as a centre meets the policy requirements.

This policy requires the District Centres to provide the Infrastructure required to support any new development or at least provide suitable mitigation. Again we set out in others Matters the shortcomings of the policy requirements.

We highlight the Road access and Medical facilities as two issues we believe that have not been properly considered in the context of West Mersea being on an Island.