

## Local Plan Examination Response, March 2021

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Further to my objection in 2017 regarding the inclusion of Middlewick Ranges in the Local Plan, none of the subsequent information provided by the MoD Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) or the Colchester Borough Council (CBC) gives me confidence that any of my original concerns are being addressed. Beyond that, the Plan includes little/no benefit for existing residents in the impacted, or surrounding, areas.

### Matter 2 – Sustainable Growth Policy

Policy SG1: Colchester Spatial Strategy states: Throughout the Borough, growth will be located at the most accessible and sustainable location...' and that 'Development will be focused on highly accessible locations to reduce the need to travel.'

Middlewick Ranges is neither 'most accessible' nor 'sustainable' as a location for new homes. There is very little employment in close proximity to it, therefore the only way to get anywhere from there for work is to travel. The Mersea Road/Abbots Road/Old Heath/Whitehall Road corridor is already hugely busy at peak times with road usage and 1000 new homes on Middlewick will inevitably exacerbate the existing problems. The proposed 'Rapid Transit' facility for the Garden Community does not reach Middlewick Ranges and existing bus coverage is expensive and inadequate. Rail links are only accessible by taking one or more buses to Colchester Town or The Hythe.

Supporting any building on Middlewick Ranges must surely go directly against the intent behind Policy SG1 as quoted above.

### Matter 3 – Environmental Assets Policy

Policy ENV1: Environment states 'The Local Planning Authority will conserve and enhance Colchester's natural and historic environment, countryside and coastline'. It also states 'Proposals for development that would cause direct or indirect adverse harm to... ancient woodland, Important Hedgerows and veteran trees will not be permitted...'

Policy ENV3: Green Infrastructure states 'The Local Planning Authority will aim to protect, enhance and deliver a comprehensive green infrastructure network comprising strategic green links between the rural hinterland, urban Colchester, river corridors and open spaces across the Borough.

The Essex Wildlife Trust submitted a detailed objection as to why using Middlewick Ranges as a housing site was such a bad idea, which I trust the examiners have seen and taken account of, not least because it identifies the importance of the site as a feeding foraging ground for migrating birds in relation to the other areas around it and because of the specific biodiversity that will be directly or indirectly impacted by any building there.

During Lockdown, and because of the need to stay 'Local', we have regularly walked from Middlewick Ranges to Donyland Woods, Friday Woods and on to Abberton Reservoir, which has

made it very clear just how close to each other and 'joined up' these areas are. Nature has given us a conjoined green infrastructure, without the need for CBC to do anything!

Potential development ideas published by the DIO trample roughshod over ancient woodland, established hedgerows, veteran trees and scarce acid grassland.

Supporting any building on Middlewick Ranges must surely go directly against the intent behind Policies ENV1 and ENV3, as quoted above.

#### **Main Matter 4a - Generic Infrastructure and Mitigation Requirements**

Policy PP1: Generic Infrastructure and Mitigation Requirements – the opening statement is that 'i) Adequate wastewater and sewage infrastructure' must be provided and section 8.6 states 'that the necessary infrastructure upgrades should be in place prior to developments coming forward'.

Anyone familiar with the existing sewage treatment works in Haven Road will see these statements and laugh. The current situation is that there are frequent releases of noxious fumes and, whether this is due to current over-capacity or ineptitude by the operator, adding any further sewage into the mix, let alone for 7-10,000 homes, will be a disaster for the area in general and the existing residents in particular. If these necessary upgrades are not completed ahead of developments, then they must NOT be allowed to start.

#### **Matter 7 – East Colchester**

Policy EC3: East Colchester – In the latest Draft Plan, Whitehall Road is mentioned as part of this Policy as 'an area that will be protected to retain their function and role as key clusters for a range of businesses including start-ups'. In the 'minor' modifications document published after the latest draft, item 138 changes the nature of the usage most significantly, as follows:

'Approximately 30 new dwellings of a mix and type of housing to be compatible with development in the adjacent Old Heath area. Access via Whitehall for the employment and via Rowhedge Road for the residential development', with the rather feeble excuse/explanation of 'Text on Place Farm enabling residential missing'.

Sneaking an 30 additional dwellings on the back of employment policy without giving local residents opportunity to respond to their inclusion in the Local Plan is at best underhand and, to my mind, hardly a 'minor modification'!. All of my comments regarding Middlewick Ranges in my original objection apply equally to this proposed inclusion in the Local Plan. Traffic, Air Quality, Wildlife, School places and other services such as GP Surgeries in the area are just not equipped to deal with additional numbers.

Further, looking at the map SG3, the proposed usage of this area, be it for employment or dwellings, seems to span a designated Local Wildlife Site. Is that ever allowed under the Planning Policy Framework? In any case, this proposed development threatens to further blur the boundary between Old Heath and Rowhedge.