

Section 2 - Publication Draft Colchester Borough Local Plan

Representation ID: 7217
Legally compliant? Not specified

Received: 08/08/2017
Sound? No

Respondent: Mr SD Cox
Duty to co-operate? Not specified

Representation: Objections to the format of this draft plan

Objection to the use of the Middlewick Site for Housing-

- as it is the only natural wildlife area in South Colchester.
- It is used by many Borough residents.
- The site is contaminated from armaments and animal carcasses (foot and mouth).
- The site is crisscrossed by Public Rights of Way.
- Site included late in process after close of initial (Preferred Options).
- The lies told to the people re the future of the site - concern about transparency.
- Inadequate infrastructure - adverse impact on local highway network and hospitals.

Full text:

Insufficient Infrastructure

I too, want to raise the topic of infrastructure and ask about the late addition of a further area and the inclusion of at least 1000 houses (and I can't believe that any developer, given the size of Middlewick, would be satisfied at building a thousand houses. I believe that following the first set of foundations put anywhere on that site, it will eventually all be developed to the detriment of the borough), to the initial draft local plan, after the time for objections to the initial draft plan had closed.

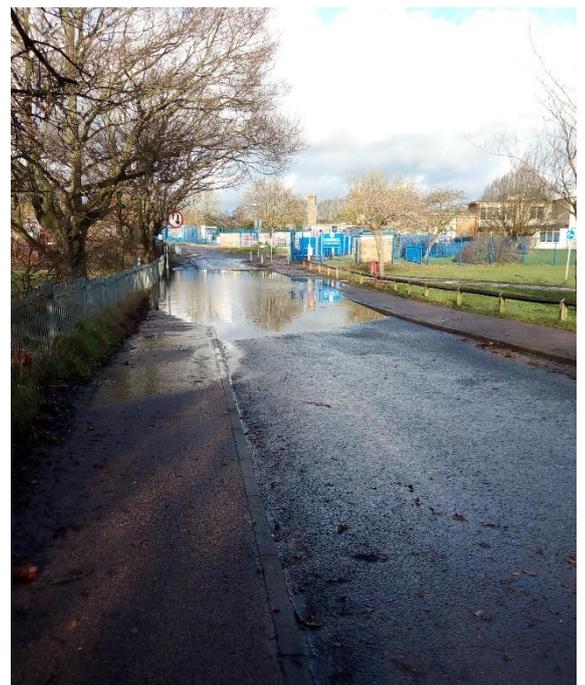
Especially in the light of the BBC news announcement on Breakfast TV (12th July), stating that "three Essex hospitals had no available beds". They went on to say that Colchester hospital was one of those three. This in the middle of summer!

So obviously no fall-back excuse that health authorities (or whatever their modern equivalents are called) usually cite for the shortage of beds i.e. "winter illnesses that effect the 'old'" causing the ill thought out title of 'bed-blocking'!

There are almost weekly reports in local press reports of long waiting lists at local doctors surgeries and very few reports of improvements to local health facilities.

While speaking of infrastructure, we should also bear in mind the overworked main drainage from the area under proposal. At any time of heavy rainfall or Spring Tides, (*appendix 1*) traffic exiting the area in an Easterly direction, via the Hythe is disrupted by the blockage of Haven Road by flood waters. This has always been so for as long as I can remember. (I'm 70 now and having lived in or around the area for all of my life, have always had to bear that particular transport blockage in mind, at such times) It is an accepted fact that building work will place additional water run-off issues for the area. (Otherwise, why was there the proposals that any hard stand build on and instead of the properties front garden area, should request planning permission?)

There are known areas around Monkwick and the Mersea Road area's that flood with monotonous regularity, (*Appendix 2*) that neither the local water company, county or borough councils are able to resolve. (School Road Monkwick, the junction of Stanstead Road & Mersea Road and the main bus route through the estate, Queen Elizabeth Way are the prime areas that regularly flood. If more open space is concreted over (were Middlewick to be developed) excess water would be drained straight to the Hythe area. What provision would be made and at whose expense, for the additional water handling required?)



School Road Monkwick (*See appendix 1*)

It's not only Middlewick and the South-eastern quadrant of Colchester that we have to contend with, there are also the planned vast developments both to the East of Colchester. (Although to be fair, the proposed 'Garden Villiage' development to the west of the town, the unwanted and unnecessary project that cost millions has finally been 'kicked off the table') This, in addition to the Northern side of the towns' very recent additions. (Cants Rose Fields, the Severalls Hospital site, the Myland Hospital site etc.) These so called Garden Villages, not only are they out of all proportion to the size of the town of Colchester, there is also for the Eastern developments, the small problem that although it will rely on the Colchester for the majority of their infrastructure and services, medical support, transport provision, shops, water and sewage, the injection of funds from central government as reward for agreeing to such developments, will fall into coffers that Colchester and the Colchester service providers cannot access.

I asked the council staff at one of the local plan consultation meetings, who all of the houses were for, pointing out that I guessed the average earnings of Colchester workers at the time of asking (2017) was around £30 - 35,000 per annum and with mortgage lending capped to 3½ times that annual wage, it would appear that the housing for local people would top out at £122,500 per property. I can't remember the last time that I saw a 'new build' advertised in Colchester for that sort of price. And while I agree that from that time, there may have been small changes to both demand and house prices, by the times that things will get back to a more normal condition, once the land has been granted planning for development, it won't magically return to an unspoiled state, ever again.

Transport Links to and from Colchester.

Or alternately, if the aim was to turn Colchester into a dormitory town for London and its suburbs (and the higher wages in those areas), that would mean more capital expenditure into either the roads or rail connections with the city. While there are plans afoot to talk about the widening of parts of the A12, there is no news of actual real work starting on the project. Where are the planning applications and detailed discussion documents for these matters?

Already commuters travel at peak times on our railways in conditions that wouldn't be legal to transport livestock and if they (the additional commuters from our area) use the roads, it will only add to the almost daily carnage and loss of life that occurs on that road. Though more normally, the increase of commuting time caused by the overuse of the A12 and its regular accident caused hold-ups - not to mention the environmental damage that the additional traffic would cause.

Meanwhile our local councils Both Borough and County, only contribution is to effectively narrow road way and footpaths for the additional inclusion of cycleways sharing those same routes. And as we all know, a shared route will always lead to conflict if there are no clear rules and registration of all users and marking designating the rights if the users. (*How many times do we observe motorists parking on verges and footpaths, or cyclists swerving around traffic hold ups caused by traffic lights etc or pedestrians walking into the path of a vehicle or cycle, without being aware of the consequences that such an unguarded action will cause?)* These examples are a consequence of authorities following through on projects 'on the cheap! Smart motorways spring to mind as an example of these actions.

Another aspect to the towns infrastructure that will be impacted by the addition of housing onto Middlewick would be the restrictions placed on the town citizens to the relatively easy access to the towns cemetery. I recall from earlier years the initial conversations about the expansion of the cemetery site, at the time it would have been the North Western corner of the 'wick' – around the junction of Abbots Road and Mersea Road that our councillor was speaking about. The times of these proposals were following an idea that the MoD had for installing a concrete and brick processing plant in that area. Luckily, that idea too fell at the initial hurdles.

Objection to the use of the Middlewick Site for Housing

Middlewick offers one of the only natural wildlife areas in the South of Colchester. It is used by people from all over the borough and services Monkwick, Old Heath, New Town and surrounding villages. It is well used and promotes healthy living.

CBC claims it is against urban sprawl but a development such as this (the development of Middlewick) is at odds with such a statement. The outline and guidance for the Plan also promotes public open space. Middlewick offers this already but by building over this open space, the plan is going against one of its own aims.

Due to contamination, wildlife and historical monuments, permission should be withheld until we know where the houses will be going or if this site could take 1000 houses. It has faced years of contamination from ammunition discharges over the last 100 years or so of soldiers training on the site and also diseased livestock carcasses were buried on the site following an outbreak of foot and mouth and swine fever. (Although the council says they have no record of carcass disposal by this method. How can we believe this when neighbours from early 2000 can remember the events - although cannot produce any solid evidence of it - so should we believe the people that we know from our own community or believe the vested interests of CBC employees?)

The site is criss-crossed by public footpaths and rights of way that have just recently been moved to enable the MoD to fence off the firing range. Now that the fence will no longer be required as a safety measure (the reason used to enforce the will of the MoD at the time), will these footpaths be re-established to their former ancient routes?

Areas of Middlewick are a site of special scientific interest due to the amount of rare species discovered. This needs to be maintained if Colchester is determined to have a sustainable future. Middlewick is believed to have archaeological evidence of Neolithic and Roman life. It is also the site of ancient earth works that are the remains of an intact English Civil War redoubt, built by the round head (Parliamentary) soldiers during the 1640's siege of Colchester at the time of the English Civil War. Colchester, as the oldest recorded town should look to make this area a place for tourism as well as nature if it is serious about its reputation.

The lies told to the people

I had prophesied at our unsuccessful conclusion of protests against the MoD plans to fence off the firing range, that it would be the first stage of a process leading to houses on Middlewick - even though the local MoD command and councillors pooh poohed the idea!

In 1995 my wife started campaigning ECC for a road crossing point close to the junction of Queen Elizabeth Way and Mersea Road because of the dangers crossing the Mersea Road in heavy traffic. The man at the council (George Ward, Senior Engineer, Essex County Council Highways & Transportation, East Area Office 910, The Crescent Colchester Business Park Colchester C04 9QQ) maintained that the road wasn't busy enough to warrant a crossing at that point. After a protracted, emailed and telephoned discussion, it was requested that a traffic census be carried out during the day at both peak and off-peak times, to gauge the traffic past this particular point of Mersea Road.

Eventually, it was agreed that the traffic flow was busy enough to warrant the crossing point and eventually it was installed.

But since that time, additional housing has been built along the Mersea Road further out of Colchester - the Langenhoe, Mersea and Beerchurch Hall Road developments now also use the same road without any improvement at all resulting in much busier roads, larger traffic hold-ups and significant dangers to local estates as people attempt to use local 'rat runs' to speed up their journeys.

And now we find that the council have agreed to include into their 'local plan' yet another 1000 homes that would depend on either that same stretch of Mersea Road or Old Heath Road to gain access to any destination to the north or east, even travel to the west of the town isn't without its trials. We were told that the MoD had targets for building homes and wanted to put 2000 homes on the site but that the council had negotiated this figure down to 1000. But if the MoD had the targets for building homes (?) why would they sell the land?

In the words of Rt. Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and Minister for Defence People and Veterans in his reply to Will Quince MP dated 12th July 2017,

"We recognise the Range currently provides public amenity and this is a key part of our discussions. This work will take some time, and I hope you support these proposals as we go through that process"

thereby confirming the public access of the land for recreational purposes. This is a single example of the disingenuous untruths and implications spread by the council.

Objections to the format of this form

I note that there are also questions posed of the general public on this very form that to answer truthfully, one requires specialised knowledge. This too, is part of the process posed as lip service to the ways and means of this process, but in reality is just a means to deny any right of protest.

When any objection is raised to councillors or workers connected to the planning department, they all seem to fall back on the same themed excuse along the lines of "if we (the council) turn down any application, the developers will just appeal and central government will overrule us in favour of an unrestricted development". But we know that Colchester has met its government requirements for new housing. So even if a 'developer' does appeal to the 'inspector', the same arguments that are valid in one forum would still be valid in another! Therefore, it's yet another example of Colchester council using disingenuous untruths and reasons to avoid representing their electorate.

- **News**

20th December 2019

Flooding in Colchester leaves drivers stranded



By Katherine Palmer [REDACTED]

ROADS across north Essex were washed out after heavy rain caused serious flooding.

Among the worst hit roads were the notorious Haven Road at the Hythe in Colchester, Station Way under Colchester North station bridge, Queen Elizabeth Way, School Road and Mersea Road in Colchester and Lucy Lane South in Stanway.

Friday morning's deluge followed a month of heavy rainfall which has left the ground saturated and drains full. The Met Office said so far this month 76mm of rain has fallen on Essex, already exceeding the average for the whole of December at 52mm.

Essex Police and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service issued a warning to drivers to take care.

Last year, Colchester Council allocated £200,000 to try to tackle the flooding in Haven Road.

Distillery Lane pond regularly bursts its banks and the flooding has been impacting on businesses for years. Andrew Wynne, director of Velvis Cars in Haven Road, said: "It's awful every day, it was horrendous on Friday morning. "Nothing is being done about it and it's killing business."



In a bid to help out businesses, Colchester Council and other agencies secured funding to raise the flood barrier at Distillery Pond and add more drainage.

Ward councillor Lee Scordis said the works had been successful in so far as the road only floods during high tide but he said there is a broken mechanism at the quay which has not worked for decades.

A Colchester Council spokesman said: "Although we are not the highways and flood authority, we are continuing to assist Essex County Council and the Environment Agency to find a long-term solution to the issue of flooding at Haven Road."

A spokesman for Essex Highways added: "Many roads in Essex have suffered flooding after extremely heavy overnight rain on already soaked ground. "At Haven Road the heavy rain has coincided with a high tide to create a severe flood. Longer term plans co-ordinating work to prevent pond overflows have been progressed but this sort of combination of rain and tide remains a huge problem in tidal areas next to rivers."

Parents and their children waded through mud to get to schools on Friday morning. The footpath between Monkwick Junior School and the Willows Estate succumbed to water.

Ward councillor Dave Harris said: "It is terrible, this is a so-called safe route to school. "I have reported this to everyone and still nothing. I am appalled. I tried to clear it myself but it needs proper action."

The Environment Agency also issued a warning for flooding at the River Colne stretching from Great Yeldham to Colchester.

The warning said: “The rivers are reacting quickly and rising sharply in response to the rainfall. “Take care on riverside footpaths and don’t put yourself in unnecessary danger. “We are closely monitoring the situation.”

Elsewhere residents demanded action as frequent flooding left their road looking like a lake. Parts of Lyons Hall Road near High Garrett were said to have been under water due to large amounts of rainfall.

The stretch near to the junction with the A131 is understood to have been worse affected. But the heavy rainfall has been welcomed by one agency.

Essex and Suffolk Water runs Abberton Reservoir. A spokesman said: “We are beginning the winter refill period of our reservoirs and Abberton Reservoir is now around 60 per cent full. “Most of the water we fill Abberton reservoir with is pumped from the River Stour and we are currently transferring water into the reservoir at the full capacity that our pumping stations allow.”

Kevin Bentley, county councillor responsible for infrastructure, said: “Several roads in Essex have standing water over much of the surface as drains struggle to cope with prolonged heavy rain.

“Drivers are asked to take great care, slow down, beware other drivers moving to the centre of the road and test your brakes after going through water. If you’re not sure you can easily get through, don’t chance it as you won’t be rescued quickly – emergency services are under pressure. If there are cyclists and pedestrians nearby, please do not splash them, slow right down. Road drains are built to cope with most situations but cannot immediately drain all water from the road.”

Appendix 2

To highlight my points about flooding in the CO2 8 post code areas I have downloaded and included the map of the area that we're talking about. Using the webpages own search engine, I inserted my home address and the site: <https://flood.essex.gov.uk/know-your-flood-risk/check-if-you-re-at-risk-of-flooding/> shows that the area that is under proposal for development is actually a **critical drainage area** for a lot of southern Colchester – a lot of which has already been developed since the late 1940's onwards.

• To turn layers on and off, use the **show map categories** menu.

• Tick the box of the data you'd like to view.

• To view information about a particular asset or flood risk in an area, click on the asset or the area and the information will appear in a pop up box.

• Click the menu button  to find an address and view the map categories.

*This map forms part of the Essex County Council asset register

Find Address
43 Queen Elizabeth Way

Map Categories

- + Local Flood Assets 0/3
- Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Extent 3/3
 - Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Extent: Low
 - Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Extent: Medium
 - Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Extent: High
- + Flood Investigations 1/1
- + Critical Drainage Areas 1/1
- + Capital Programme Locations 1/1

Critical Drainage Areas
Name: [new_name]
CDA: NCOL_001
District: [district]

With the flooding that is itemised in the area (appendix 1) reaching critical levels, it does not seem logical to start further development in an area that is already in such a critical condition.