



## Wivenhoe Town Council – Opening Statement

We hope you will all have had the chance to visit and enjoy the unique character and identity of our little town, with a history dating far beyond its listing in the Domesday Book, and appreciate why we are so proud of it.

It is our intention to build on our position as stated in our submissions to this inquiry. We wish to safeguard the Wivenhoe Neighbourhood Plan (WNP), the community gains as prescribed, the policy functions and to inform the inquiry of the local conditions that guided the plan.

Whilst our objections to the proposed changes to our plan are documented in our submissions we will summarise them, briefly, now.

The WNP designated 4.06 hectares for development of 120 dwellings, and no more. This site is very clearly set out in the plan and following planning convention is marked in red. These are actual red lines, not metaphysical ones. This is the developable area and we are insistent that this remains the case. To deviate from this renders the referendum invalid, goes against the wishes of the local community and brings into question the purpose, validity and intent of the plan and the community engagement it exists on.

We note that the option to build one bed properties has not been taken up. This is the kind of housing we desperately need in Wivenhoe and the benefits of the plan have been significantly watered down by none being offered on this site. The simple fact of the matter that cannot be ignored is that 120 dwellings easily fit into the 4 allocated hectares but the developers' expected profits do not. For this reason, we want to see a density increase to preserve the scale of the land allocated for development as well as our landscape.

A multitude of factors were considered by the plan's authors over the six years it took to create the plan. We agree with Hutchings that the attempts to suggest the plan is out of date by the appellant are unfounded. This site was carefully crafted to protect the views of open countryside and prevent the feeling of coalescence and loss of amenity. The Inspector should be aware of the new town on our borders and the struggle to preserve our village feel and setting. Our plan cannot be considered in isolation from the vast levels of

unwanted development we face and the uncertainty of coalescence at this stage of the master planning process. It is an existential matter for us to preserve the countryside around us and this was the driving force behind the plan. We may wish to comment on this landscape matter further, as directed by the Inspector, following the site visit and at the appropriate time. We are also mindful of Ecological matters and we wish, if the Inspector directs, to comment on this from a better informed viewpoint at the close of this inquiry as well as draw his attention to the SEA which is contained in evidence.

The site allocation considered the walking distance to local amenities and we are keen that these are maintained to reduce traffic and encourage active travel.

If protecting our 'settlement envelope' is the plans driving force then community gain is the rationale that inspired the WNP from its infancy. We are tired of developers reneging on promises, constantly eroding any benefits to Wivenhoe and ignoring inconvenient policy that is in place to inform development. I can assure the Inspector that sitting on a Town Council Planning Committee is a life lesson in helplessness, despair and, forever being stuck at the bottom of the league table. The plan allowed us to proactively address this and create a level playing field with the developers. The deal here is stark, clear and non-negotiable. Wivenhoe will accept development to strict conditions in exchange for amenities we would otherwise not have, that is the intent of our plan. An example for this site is the additional sports fields. This community gain is set in adopted policy and we hope that this inquiry will uphold what we view as our social contract with our planning authority and ensure that residents receive the enhanced sporting facilities and planning protections they voted for.

Wivenhoe Town Council is exceptionally disappointed and extremely frustrated that we are at this stage. The purpose of the plan was to prevent loss of open space to speculative development, not to encourage it. We embarked upon our Neighbourhood Plan journey in 2013 and at every step of the way we were assured that when adopted it would be defensible. We hope that the very system that encouraged us to have a Neighbourhood Plan does not destroy it. We are tentatively starting our next neighbourhood plan and we wish to move it forwards with positivity rather than shelve it as yet another meaningless document.

We agree with the **CBC rebuttal** that adds weight to our assertion that there are no **considerations** that are significant enough to set aside the Development Plan. We note with interest the ~~excellent~~ submission from **Anne Westover** and wish the Inspector to know that we are **supportive** of her evidence.

In conclusion the purpose of policy is to safeguard and protect the area against developer creep. The policy is therefore working exactly as intended. This is a fundamental that cannot be overlooked and it such a pity that the lack of respect for our plan from the developer has led to all this expense. **The policy passed examination, is adopted, fulfils its intent and is demonstrably sound. This inquiry should be decided on this basis and should be dismissed.**