



**Appeal Ref: APP/A1530/W/25/3376495**  
**Land North of Maldon Road, Tiptree, Colchester**  
**Case Management Conference – 27 January 2026 at 10:00**

## **INSPECTOR'S PRE-CONFERENCE NOTE**

1. The case management conference (the Conference) will be led by myself, Owen Woodward, a chartered town planner and Planning Inspector.
2. The purpose of the event is to set out a clear indication as to the ongoing management of this case and the presentation of evidence, so that the forthcoming Inquiry is conducted in an efficient and effective manner. There will be no discussion as part of the Conference as to the merits of your respective cases and I will not hear any evidence.

## **Background**

3. The appeal is made by Bloor Homes (Eastern). The Council is Colchester City Council. The appeal relates to the planning application Ref 25/0435, dated 7 March 2025.
4. The appeal site is an agricultural field measuring approximately 10ha to the south-west of Tiptree. to the north-east, north and west lies an area of reclaimed gravel pits, forming part of the Inworth Grange and Brook Meadows Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The site sits to the south west of Tiptree, further west along Maldon Road, is the separate settlement of Tiptree Heath. The Site is not allocated.
5. On 5 February 2020, the Council refused an application<sup>1</sup> by the appellant for the development of the site consisting of *“up to 255 dwellings, with associated car parking, landscaping, public open space areas, SUDS, link road, associated infrastructure, and provision of parent drop-off area for Tiptree Heath Primary School”*. The subsequent appeal<sup>2</sup> was dismissed on 18 August 2020.

## **Interested Parties**

6. Tiptree Parish Council objected to the planning application, primarily on grounds of the appeal site being outside the settlement boundary in the NP and in general terms conflicting with the spatial strategy of the NP, concerns regarding highway safety and the free-flow of traffic, and the effect of the proposal on local infrastructure in particular healthcare. The Chairman of the Parish has since written to confirm that they wish to make a statement at the outset of the Inquiry

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<sup>1</sup> LPA Reference 192025

<sup>2</sup> PINS Reference 3248038

and also at the end and also be involved in the round-table discussions. Please can we discuss at the Conference how this might be best accommodated.

### **The Proposal**

7. The description of development is for up to 165 dwellings (including affordable housing), car park, public open space, landscaping, children's play area, sustainable drainage infrastructure and all other associated infrastructure.
8. The application is made in outline with all matters reserved other than access, which is applied for in full. Page 11 of the Draft Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) list drawings for determination. Please can we confirm this list at the Conference.

### **Main Issues**

9. The application was refused on 30 September 2025. The reasons for refusal are with regard to conflict with the spatial strategy including the Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan (the NP), harm to the character and appearance of the area including landscape character and leading to coalescence between Tiptree and Tiptree Heath, and harm to biodiversity including to the Essex Coast European Protected Sites (EPS) and Tiptree Heath SSSI. The fourth reason for refusal relates to harm to local infrastructure in the absence of a completed s106 Planning Agreement (s106).
10. I am working on the assumption that a final s106 would meet the concerns raised in the fourth reason for refusal. The Council's Statement of Case (SoC) has also confirmed that an appropriate contribution towards the Essex Coast RAMS would overcome the concern relating to the EPSs. Natural England and/or Essex Wildlife Trust and the appellant are, I understand, in negotiations regarding agreeing the required mitigation measures in relation to the SSSI. Please can an update on this be provided at the Conference but, for now, I am proceeding on the basis that the third reason for refusal can also be overcome.
11. Based on this and the other documentation I have received, I set out below my current understanding of the main issues for the appeal:
  - whether or not the appeal site is an appropriate location for development of this type, having regard to local and national planning policy and guidance; and,
  - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, including on landscape character and coalescence.
12. In addition, the Council's housing land supply position is potentially in dispute. The Council's SoC claims a supply of 3.59 years but would concede 3.37 years for the purposes of the Inquiry. The Council further requests that an alternative is that a range of housing land supply between 2.77 and 3.37 years be adopted, and that therefore housing land supply does not need to be considered at the Inquiry. Please can we discuss at the Conference.

## **The Inquiry**

13. The Inquiry is currently scheduled to sit for six days, from 17 to 20 March and 24 to 25 March 2026 inclusive. It is to be held at The Old Library, Colchester Town Hall, West Stockwell Street, Colchester, CO1 1HE. Please can the Council confirm the venue's facilities. In particular, please can we discuss the capacity, microphones, hybrid attendance functionality, wi-fi, retiring rooms, parking, food, and whether or not it will be secure for the purposes of leaving documents overnight.
14. The Inquiry will focus on areas where there is disagreement. With that in mind, the Conference will explore how best to hear the evidence in order to ensure that the Inquiry is conducted as efficiently as possible. I would like to discuss at the Conference what witnesses the main parties wish to field, and the general approach to the production of evidence. The Council has indicated it will be fielding four witnesses, with the topics to be confirmed. The appellant has indicated it will be fielding five witnesses, covering planning, urban design, landscape, housing land supply, affordable housing, and potentially a further witness with regard to ecology/biodiversity.
15. We will need to discuss how the evidence is to be heard for each topic, ie round-table session or cross-examination. Please can we also discuss whether we field the witnesses on a topic-by-topic order, or if it will firstly be all of the Council's witnesses then the appellants'.
16. Depending on the outcome of these discussions and on our agreement on the main issues and the scope of the Inquiry, we may need to re-visit the length of the Inquiry.

## **Other**

17. A Core Document List (CDL) will need to be produced and then kept up-to-date as the appeal progresses, including at the Inquiry itself. We can discuss at the Conference how best to manage this.
18. An Inquiry Website will be required. I would like to discuss responsibility for this, and for the ongoing maintenance of it both up to and during the Inquiry, at the Conference.
19. I will conduct a site visit ahead of the Inquiry. I would like to discuss at the Conference how best I might undertake this visit, which would be unaccompanied.

## **Costs**

20. No applications for costs have yet been made. If any applications are to be made, Planning Practice Guidance makes it clear that this should be made in writing before the Inquiry. You are also reminded in this regard, that to support an effective and timely planning system in which all parties are required to behave reasonably, I have the ability to initiate an award of costs, although hopefully I won't have to use this power.

## Timetable

21. We will discuss at the Conference the timetable for submissions in the lead-up to the Inquiry. Below is the provisional timetable:

- I will issue a note of this Conference by **28 January 2026**;
- A final CDL must be agreed ahead of the Proofs of Evidence so that the documents can be appropriately referenced;
- The deadline for the Proofs of Evidence, final version of the SoCG, and any topic-specific SoCG, eg housing land supply and/or biodiversity, is **17 February 2026**;
- The Council must send a copy of the inquiry notification letter by **24 February 2026**. This is also the deadline for all parties to provide time estimates for Evidence in Chief and cross-examination of witnesses, to inform my Preliminary Inquiry Schedule; and,
- Any Rebuttal Proofs of Evidence, round-table session agendas, a final draft and agreed s106 Agreement, a CIL Compliance Schedule from the Council, and a completed and agreed draft conditions schedule should all be provided by **3 March 2026**. This will also be the date that by which I intend to finalise the Inquiry Schedule.

## Any Other Business

22. The attached Annex sets out the preferred format and content of proofs and other material, which is to be observed by all parties to the Inquiry.

23. The Council are encouraged to draw the attention of interested parties to this Note, including posting a copy on its web site.

O S Woodward  
**INSPECTOR**  
23 January 2026

**Annex:** Content and Format of Proofs and Appendices

## **Annex: Content and Format of Proofs and Appendices**

### **Content**

Proofs of evidence **should**:

- focus on the main issues identified, in particular on areas of disagreement;
- be proportionate to the number and complexity of issues and matters that the witness is addressing;
- be concise, precise, relevant and contain facts and expert
- opinion deriving from witnesses' own professional expertise and experience, and/or local knowledge;
- be prepared with a clear structure that identifies and addresses the main issues within the witness's field of knowledge and avoids repetition;
- focus on what is really necessary to make the case and avoid including unnecessary material, or duplicating material in other documents or another witness's evidence; and,
- where data is referred to, include that data, and outline any relevant assessment methodology and the assumptions used to support the arguments (unless this material has been previously agreed and is included as part of the statement of common ground).

Proofs **should not**:

- duplicate information already included in other Inquiry material, such as the officer's report, decision notice, site description, planning history and the relevant planning policy; and,
- recite the text of policies referred to elsewhere: the proofs need only identify the relevant policy numbers, with extracts being provided as core documents. Only policies which are needed to understand the argument being put forward and are fundamental to an appraisal of the proposals' merits need be referred to.

### **Format of the proofs and appendices:**

- proofs to be no longer than 3000 words if possible. Where proofs are longer than 1500 words, summaries are to be submitted;
- proofs are to be spiral bound or bound in such a way as to be easily opened and read;
- front covers to proofs and appendices are to be clearly titled, with the name of the witness and relevant qualifications on the cover;
- both pages and paragraphs are to be numbered;
- appendices are to be bound separately; and,
- appendices are to be indexed using **projecting tabs**, labelled and **paginated**.