



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM RECEIVED 27 MAR 2014
To:

Mr Adrian Pritchard
Chief Executive
Colchester Borough Council
Rowan House
33 Sheepen Road
Colchester CO3 3WG

25th March 2014

Dear Mr Pritchard,

Re: Support our Town Centres

Please find enclosed a copy of a response I have received from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Planning. I hope that this may be of interest and assistance towards future planning policy to support the Town Centre – and to counter the legalistic comments from promoting of out-of-town retail developments.

Specifically I highlight the Minister's comment that "...only if suitable (town centre) sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered."

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Sir Bob Russell,
MP for Colchester

Enc

Copies: Councillor Anne Turrell and Essex County Standard

PLEASE REPLY TO: Magdalen Hall, Wimpole Road, Colchester CO1 2DE
TELEPHONE: 01206 506600 - FAX: 01206 506610 - EMAIL: susan.hislop@parliament.uk

DATA PROTECTION ACT

Whilst Sir Bob Russell MP will treat as confidential any personal information you pass on, he will allow staff and authorised volunteers to see if this is needed to help and advise you. He may also pass on all or some of this information to agencies such as Government Departments, the Inland Revenue or the local Council if this is necessary to help you with your case. Sir Bob Russell MP may wish to write to you from time to time to keep you informed on issues that you may find of interest. Please let him know if you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose.



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

RECEIVED

21 MAR 2014

Sir Bob Russell MP
Magdalen Hall
Wimpole Road
Colchester
CO1 2DE

Nick Boles MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning)

Department for Communities and Local
Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Tel: 0303 444 3459
Fax: 020 7821 0635
E-Mail: nick.boles@communities.gsi.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dclg

Our Ref: ER/NB/005707/14

19 MAR 2014

Nick Boles

SUPPORT OUR TOWN CENTRES

Thank you for your letter of the 24 February to the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP about an *Essex County Standard* newspaper report about planning guidelines, which suggests a serious impact on Colchester Town Centre. I am replying as the matters you raise fall within my Ministerial responsibilities.

You will understand that given my role in the planning system I am unable to comment on specific planning proposals nor am I able to comment on the review conducted by the independent inspector. However, I am able to outline government policy, which is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework published in March 2012, and to which local planning policies must conform.

The Government is committed to supporting local shops and high streets and makes clear that local councils should recognise their town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality. We have put in place a range of tools and powers to enable local councils to respond to the pressures facing high streets and town centres, including lifting planning restrictions, amending guidance on parking and changes to business rates

The Framework promotes a town centre first policy, but this does not mean that the Government opposes out-of-centre development for its own sake. It is for local planning authorities to apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan. They should require applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. The Framework clearly states where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact on one or more of the above factors, it should be refused.

Building on this, the Chancellor's recent Autumn Statement included the biggest package of business rates support in over 20 years, providing approximately £950m benefit to all businesses in England, of which approximately £500m will benefit retail in England. The town centres announcement made by the Secretary of State on 6 December 2013 sets out what more the Government is doing, including making it easier for businesses on our high streets to grow and making parking cheaper and more readily available. You can find further information at: www.gov.uk/government/news/eric-pickles-launches-package-of-support-for-local-shops.

Yours ever
Nick

NICK BOLES MP