

9.1 200351 Land at Dawes Lane, West Mersea

Written Submission from David Cooper, on behalf of STOP350, in opposition to the application

My name is David Cooper for STOP350 and we present strong objections to this application which has generated very significant concerns on the Island.

You are being asked to support the principle of residential development on a site which conflicts with up to date and relevant policies of your adopted Local Plan. Your officers accept that this site lies outside the settlement boundary and forms part of the open countryside designated as such for its intrinsic landscape character and beauty. There is therefore very direct conflict with Policy ENV1.

That policy is not to be set aside, given that your officers confirm that the Council is able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. I would ask you to hold this important point in your minds please – your officers have made clear that there is no justification whatsoever for granting planning permission on this site to deal with any short-term housing land supply issues.

The justification put to you for supporting this application is compliance with policy SS12a of the Emerging Section 2 Local Plan. It is not correct to state that this site is allocated in the emerging Section 2 Plan – the site is no more than a draft allocation and can only be confirmed as an allocation if and when the Section 2 Local Plan is adopted.

There is of course some way to go in the Local plan adoption process. The Inspector has made it clear he needs a formal request from the NEAs to proceed with modifications to Part 1 or withdraw and the further work required and timescale for any modification work. After which Section 2 can be independently examined and the significant level of objections to the draft allocations, as confirmed by your officers, can be put before the independent inspector.

Until that time, only limited weight can be attributed to the Section 2 Plan given the provisions of the NPPF which makes clear that the greater the level of objection the less the weight can be attributed. This was precisely the point raised by the Secretary of State in the Tiptree appeal earlier this year.

Your officers seek to address the objections to the draft allocation in the report before you so as to encourage you to add weight to the draft allocation. Please be under no illusion – this is by no means a substitute for the independent examination process which is some way off. And whilst your officers consider that the draft allocation accords with the provisions of the NPPF and officers are in essence telling you that the draft allocation will be confirmed. However Part 1 which was pursued relentlessly has run into serious problems as we have witnessed.

To conclude, my respectful submissions are that this application simply cannot be supported and as a minimum the committee should consider deferring or refusing the application so that decisions can be made on the Section 1 and – by implication – Section 2 Plans before any premature planning applications are determined.

Thank you.

(500 words)

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Written Submission from Andrew Ransome, in support of the application

Good Evening Councillors, and thank you for the opportunity to speak in favour of this outline planning application for 100 dwellings, together with land for community uses and public open space at Dawes Lane, West Mersea.

My name is Andrew Ransome and I am the agent acting on behalf of the applicant, Mersea Homes Ltd, a well-respected and local company on the Island.

We have great admiration for the Council in arranging this virtual planning committee. It is important for society that democratic processes continue to proceed despite these testing times and restrictions.

We are pleased that this application has been recommended for approval by the planning department and I will not repeat the contents of the committee report, which are thorough and clearly explained.

Critically, the proposed scheme seeks to secure planning permission for the Council's preferred option for this site as set out in Section 2 of the emerging local plan, which can be given significant weight in decision-making given that plan has reached an advanced stage in the development plan preparation process and is currently subject to examination.

The committee report succinctly explains the nuances in respect to the weight that can be attached. Of particular note, it explains that there are no unresolved objections from the local plan process that cannot be mitigated against through this application submission.

Whilst this scheme seeks 100 dwellings, it will also be important to stress that it will deliver significant community infrastructure and public benefits. The proposal allows for over 12 acres of land for community uses, public open space and landscaping, far in excess of normal policy requirements.

This application does not seek to dictate how this land will be used, but rather, it seeks to establish the principle of this land being used for community uses.

We are aware from our discussions with key consultees, including the Parish Council, the GP Surgery, the Glebe and members of the public that there are many ideas for this land and how it can benefit the wider community of West Mersea. Securing consent for its use now will give some certainty and provide the emerging Neighbourhood Plan a tremendous opportunity to shape a vision and plan for this parcel of land that they themselves will potentially have control over.

The case officer has worked positively and proactively with the Applicant during the course of the planning application process to ensure that this application fulfils the Council's planning policy requirements and ensure that it can be recommended for approval.

I therefore hope you can agree with your planning officer and support this proposal.

Thank you for your time.

(436 words)

Written Submission from Councillor Patricia Moore: to be read by Councillor Jowers

Dawes Lane application for 100 units

It is my opinion that this application is premature. You will all have read the cogent arguments supporting this view. There is a great desire by officers to get this application safely in the bag and they will argue to that end. It's up to you to decide whose lawyer puts the best case.

This meeting is being held under constraints put on it by the need to social distance but with the best that ingenuity can provide it falls short of being open. The number of consultees that have failed to respond indicate the shortcomings of the process.

Ignoring the fact that huge numbers of people have made the effort to object, the fact that both East and West Mersea council are so against this development, must give a long pause for thought.

The Coastal protection belt was set up for a good reason - to protect our precious coastal landscape. It should not be dismissed as trivial whenever it suits. Because this proposed development creeps over the brow of the hill it will be seen for miles around and it will change what is at present a rural land scape into a suburban scene. The precious view of the approach to the island that one sees from the Strood will be ruined for ever, it is a real case of planning creep. It can be seen from the photos provided that deciduous trees do not provide a screen in the winter, the planting belt suggested is in no way adequate.

There have been various goodies offered with this application, including a site for a medical centre but there is no appetite in the community for a medical centre on this site. It is too far from the centre and is not served by public transport. The site suggested would further creep over the hill and be an intrusion on the landscape - so too would any other community building.

The medical services are already over-stretched and the cash sums suggested will no way solve that. The school will not have capacity to deal with the 200 new families living in Brierley Paddocks and Dawes Lane. These families collectively might quite easily have as many as 300 children. These two developments will increase the overall permanent population by about 10%.

The population of Mersea Island is approaching 8,000, In the summer this at least doubles with the 2,000, mostly static, caravans and lodges, add to this the thousands of day trippers and anyone can see that with our one, tidal dependant, access road we are already stretched to breaking. Whatever government housing figures demand there is no responsible excuse for making this worse.

The RAMS scheme, though much vaunted, will do no more than provide a one-off payment to fund greater awareness of wildlife and possibly a warden on a jet ski. I suggest this is no more than a very small sticky plaster on a very large sore.

If you cannot find it in your conscience to refuse this application then there should be no development north of a line between 51degrees, 47 mins, 08' N and 51degrees, 47mins, 09' N in other words the northern half of the site.

A Planting belt 5 trees wide to screen development with some trees that are not bare in the winter eg holm oaks. A mix of evergreens and deciduous would be needed.

(Total word count 571)

9.2 190043 Phase 2, Land west of Brook Street, Colchester

Written Submission from Jonathan Baldwin, in opposition to the application

I write to oppose this application.

The neighbouring residents and property-owners have voiced their objections at every stage of this application, including a petition with 580 signatories. This is far greater than the number of people who will benefit from the proposed development.

The issues with the proposals include the following: -

- The design of the buildings is completely incongruous with the historic area in which they will be sited. This includes their 'blocky' design, flat roofs, balconies, irregular fenestration and lurid colours. These will be highly visible from the adjoining developments if not from across the town;
- The buildings are several storeys too tall and too close to the existing developments on George Williams Way and Magdalen Close. We will be left with a total lack of privacy (irrespective of any frosted glass) and our views across the town will be ruined. This will adversely impact the sale and rental value of our properties;
- Having a construction site this close to our homes will make our lives miserable for the considerable future. Regardless of the planning conditions, there will be noise, dust and a lack of privacy that cannot be mitigated;
- The proposed development is too dense for the site. The original proposal of 58 dwellings was far more appropriate. The developer's argument that this is "unviable" does not justify overdevelopment and is merely motivated by profit;
- There is minimal diversity of accommodation - very few one bed flats and no houses;
- Parking is a huge problem in this area of the town and it is fanciful to suggest that the recommended 235 spaces will not be needed;
- There are widely-held concerns about traffic congestion on Brook Street and the resultant impact on safety, air quality and noise. The planning reports do not reflect the reality experienced by us residents;
- Others have expressed concern about the lack of an alternative habitat for wildlife. The loss of greenery will also have an impact on the air quality and reduce the privacy currently afforded to the existing developments;
- Others have expressed concern about the impact on services that are already overstretched in the town centre;
- Others have expressed concern that the increased footfall via George Williams Way will lead to increased anti-social behaviour, which is already an issue we have to suffer day-by-day.

These issues have been unfairly downplayed by the planning officer and I would urge the committee to give weight to them when making their decision.

Unfortunately, it is a widely held view in Colchester that we have a council that is happy to give the seal of approval to any planning application that comes its way, regardless of the aspirations and fears of its residents. I am therefore sincere in my hope that the Committee will dispel this notion by refusing this application.

I thank you for your time.

(471 words)

9.2 190043 Phase 2, Land west of Brook Street, Colchester

Written Submission from Catherine Spindler in opposition to the application

I wish to support and endorse the comments of The Mayor, Councillor Cope and Councillor for New Town and Castle, who called-in this application and also the 580 signature petition presented by [REDACTED] that I note has not been recorded as a representation of the wishes of those living on the George Williams Estate who are going to be significantly impacted.

The neighbouring development of the Sawmill Estate should serve as a warning to any potential development on this site. This application does not learn from the failings of its neighbour but instead replicates them.

One parking space for each accommodation with only 4 'visitor' parking spaces are insufficient. The proposed free for all for parking is going to be a nightmare for all residents, particularly with 105 families on this development.

There appears to be no consideration for disabled residents both access and parking. What disability access impact assessment has been carried out?

The bin store to serve these blocks are far too small as showing in comparison to the size of car. On similar sites these bin stores overflow with rubbish quickly and become a hazard.

With family accommodation at every level including on the top floor of a five-story building the stairs appear inadequate, i.e. too narrow (for example) for a single parent with a double buggy to negotiate 5 flights of stairs. What assessment has been made as to the suitability of these stairs for young children with double buggies including a fire safety/risk?

I note that the Police are unable to comment due to not being provided sufficient detail. Considering both the current and potential level of crime in the immediate area, I would request that no consent is granted without a full consultation with the Police to better assess the risks.

There are no play facilities already in either George Williams Estate or the Sawmill Estate. This offers no facilities either. Children already access the railway tracks. Can a play facility therefore be part of any consideration for any planning application on this site?

This site is not in Castle for education purposes but within New Town and Christ Church. Vehicles will be needed by 105 families to reach schools adding to parking pressures.

The proposed buildings are little more than tower blocks which would create an horrendous view from Brook Street as well as for visitors to Firstsite.

The area is already over developed and this simply adds to the existing pressure on vehicular movement and pollution. I would recommend the Committee visit Brook Street during peak times to see for themselves.

It is clear from this proposal that the developer is seeking as much value from the site without consideration for those who would live there or their wider neighbours. This should be refused as unsafe, unsuitable and adding pressure to an already overdeveloped area.

(474 words)

9.2 190043 Phase 2, Land west of Brook Street, Colchester

Written Submission from Michael Smith, in support of the application

On behalf of Inland Homes, thank you for the opportunity to address the committee this evening. You will hear about the proposed scheme in more detail later this evening, therefore I would like to take this opportunity to describe the background to the proposal to re-plan the existing scheme and to highlight the community benefits that will be secured through the redevelopment of the site.

The site is allocated for residential development in the local plan and the existing planning permission has been implemented and the conversion of the former rectory on the Brook Street frontage is complete and fully occupied. The access road to Phase 2 is also in place, but the approved scheme for 58 apartments is not financially viable and planning permission is sought for an alternative scheme that re-uses elements of the approved scheme that were found to be acceptable, combining them with a greater number of new homes. The proposal responds to the constraints and opportunities presented by the site in the same way as the approved scheme, using the topography left by the previous use as railway sidings to take advantage of the isolation that results, allowing a distinct character to be created that need not relate to the form of development in the surrounding area.

The site is on the edge of the town centre and in a sustainable location, enjoying easy access on foot, by cycle or via public transport to the services and facilities in the heart of Colchester. An increased density would be appropriate and the application proposes a substantial change to the approved form of development, with the apartments equally split between five buildings that are regularly spaced along the north side of the estate road, ensuring that the scheme does not create a mass comparable to the large blocks that stand above the site in George Williams Way, which are a distinct feature of the town's skyline. The apartments face out in all directions, creating an active frontage and offering surveillance of the public realm, amenity space and parking courtyards, making the scheme a secure and safe place to live.

Although the viability of the proposed scheme is an important issue, a suite of community benefits will be secured, including funding for off-site works such as improvements to the Castle Gardens Medical Centre and upgrading street lighting and CCTV coverage on Ernulph Path and the footbridge across the western end of the site, and works inside the site that include a new cycleway link from Brook Street to George Williams Way, land for the East Transit Corridor and a connection to it, a base for a car club vehicle and a new area of public open space.

An increased number of new homes is proposed, but balanced by a design that reduces the visual and social impacts of the scheme, including funding for works to existing facilities and services to address the potential increase in demand and facilitating journeys on foot or by cycle to keep traffic generation to a minimum. To conclude, a high-quality scheme that respects the surrounding area is proposed and, as such, I trust that you will concur with the case officer's recommendation and resolve to approve the application.

(535 words)

9.2 190043 Phase 2, Land west of Brook Street, Colchester

Written Submission from Councillor Mark Goacher

I object to this development because it will increase the level of pollution and congestion in Brook Street, Colchester's most polluted street according to the Borough Council's own nitrogen dioxide monitoring.

A development of this density and volume of dwellings in this location would only be sustainable in terms of air quality if the dwellings were car free and instead cycling infrastructure was prioritised.

Brook Street has a huge air pollution problem and the bottom end regularly exceeds the legal limit of 40 micro grams of NO₂ per cubic metre of air. Additionally, it has been shown that excessive air pollution amplifies the symptoms of Covid 19.

We should not be inflicting even more air pollution on the residents of Brook Street by taking away nearby green space and bringing in even more cars.

(134 words)