

Colchester Preferred Options Local Plan Representation

Land at Maldon Road, Tiptree

Strutt & Parker LLP

1. Introduction

- 1.1. These representations are submitted by Strutt and Parker LLP on behalf of Bloor Homes in response to formal consultation on the Colchester Preferred Options Local Plan (2016).
- 1.2. Our clients – Bloor Homes – are actively promoting the residential allocation of land at Maldon Road, Tiptree (site location plan provided as **Appendix 1**) through the plan-making process. The land is identified as site reference 104 in the Council’s Call for Sites, SLAA reference C104 / TIP09.
- 1.3. Land at Maldon Road, Tiptree is a sustainable and deliverable site with the potential to contribute towards meeting local housing need.

2. Local Plan Vision

- 2.1. We support the vision (paragraph 3.5) to maintain a good housing delivery rate over the plan period to meet objectively assessed housing need. As per paragraph 182 of the NPPF, it is essential that the Local Plan includes a deliverable and justified strategy that will enable objectively assessed housing need to be met in full.
- 2.2. In order for the Local Plan to be compliant with the NPPF, it should not only seek to meet objectively assessed development needs of the Borough in full, but also unmet needs of its neighbours where it is sustainable and reasonable to do so.
- 2.3. We support the identification (paragraph 3.9) of Tiptree as a key district settlement providing essential services and facilities to their rural hinterland. In order to achieve this, and to ensure Tiptree continues to perform this important role, it will be critical for the Local Plan to facilitate the sustainable growth of the settlement.

3. Policy SG1 – Settlement hierarchy

- 3.1. We support the identification of Tiptree as a second tier settlement in the Borough’s settlement hierarchy, below only Colchester.

- 3.2. It should be recognised that the adopted Colchester Core Strategy (2008) identified Tiptree as one of the Borough's three main settlements outside of Colchester Town, and a sustainable settlement to accommodate a significant proportion of the Borough's housing allocation at the time. There have not been any material changes in the characteristics of Tiptree such as to warrant a change in its position within the Borough's settlement hierarchy.
- 3.3. Tiptree is an established district centre with a population of 9,182 (Census, 2011). The village is identified as a Rural District Centre, and provides a range of shops, facilities and services which not only serve its residents but also those of surrounding rural communities. As recognised within the Preferred Options (paragraph 6.196), Tiptree is extremely well served in terms of educational facilities, with four primary schools and a secondary school. The sustainability of Tiptree to accommodate growth is further demonstrated by the presence of four Local Economic Areas in the village, providing local employment opportunities.
- 3.4. Further to the above, the statement at paragraph 6.194 of the Preferred Options that the services support the need of both the residents of Tiptree and rural communities in the surrounding area is supported. It is critical that the Local Plan supports the sustainable growth of the settlement of Tiptree, to ensure it can continue to perform its important role for residents of the settlement and the surrounding area.

4. Policy SG2 – Housing Delivery

- 4.1. We support the proposal to deliver at *least* 920 homes per year between 2017 and 2033. This approach is supported in principle by the NPPF which not only calls for a significant boost to the supply of housing (paragraph 47), but also makes clear that Local Plans should ensure a strategy is in place to meet objectively assessed development needs of not only the administrative area in question, but also unmet needs of neighbouring areas where it is sustainable and reasonable to do so (paragraph 182).
- 4.2. It is crucial that the strategy for delivering homes to meet local needs is not overly reliant on large, strategic sites that are a) unable to contribute towards housing need in the short-term; and b) are likely to prove highly challenging to deliver, requiring the coordination of multiple parties and agencies. The NPPF not only highlights the importance of ensuring strategies are deliverable (paragraph 182), but that a constant five-year housing land supply is sustained over the plan period (paragraph 47), and that the strategy for meeting objectively assessed

housing needs is sufficiently flexible in order to respond to change (paragraph 14). As such, it is important to ensure that a range of sites capable of delivering housing for the various communities that make up the Borough, and across the plan period are identified. Further, it is also key that the Local Plan treats the identified housing need figure as a minimum, enabling the plan to respond to changing circumstances over the plan period (e.g. identified sites failing to coming forward, demographic changes resulting in an increase in housing need, etc.).

4.3. We support the preferred approach of directing an element of housing growth to the Borough's towns and villages to maintain their vitality and viability. Both the NPPF (see for example paragraph 55) and the NPPF (paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 50-001-20160519) recognise the importance of planning in ensuring smaller centres are sustained and can continue to perform their important roles for the local communities they serve. Facilitating housing growth is recognised as an important part of this. Additionally, such an approach is considered appropriate due to the functionally separate nature of the various settlements within the Borough.

4.4. The preferred approach of directing a minimum of 600 dwellings to Tiptree over the plan period is supported. For the reasons set out in Section 3 of this representation, Tiptree represents a sustainable location for housing growth; and the growth of the village will help ensure its facilities and services – which provide an important function for not only residents of Tiptree, but also those of the surrounding smaller settlement – are sustained.

5. Policy SS15

Number of new homes

5.1. Policy SS15 – and the Policy Map linked to it – identifies broad areas of growth for Tiptree and proposes that the Neighbourhood Plan currently being prepared by the Parish Council allocate specific sites required for the delivery of 600 dwellings. It should be recognised that Policy SG2 proposes a *minimum* of 600 new homes in Tiptree, to help deliver *at least* 14,720 new homes for the Borough between 2017 and 2033.

5.2. It is important that Policy SS15 makes clear that the Neighbourhood Plan for Tiptree will need to allocate a minimum of 600 dwellings, and this figure is not to be treated as a ceiling which

should not be exceeded. We note that paragraph 6.199 states Tiptree can accommodate “up to an additional 600 new dwellings over the plan period”. This statement is at odds with Policy SS2, which expresses 600 as a minimum figure, and there is no evidence to suggest that the settlement of Tiptree cannot accommodate more than 600 dwellings over the plan period.

- 5.3. If a subsequent Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan were to fail to treat this figure as a minimum not only would this be contrary to Policy SS2 of the Local Plan, there is also risk that the flexibility of the Borough’s strategy to meet housing need and its ability to respond to changing circumstances would be undermined, and it may result in a disproportionate level of housing growth being directed to less sustainable settlements. Clarity that this number is to be treated as a minimum should be provided to ensure the Local Plan is effective and positively prepared, as required by the NPPF (paragraph 182).

Broad areas of growth

- 5.4. The identification of land at Maldon Road, Tiptree as a broad area of growth is supported.
- 5.5. This area of the village benefits from a lack of physical constraints that would prohibit the development of homes. It is not subject to any environmental, ecological or heritage designations that would restrict development.
- 5.6. It represents a sustainable location for new homes, being located immediately opposite Tiptree Heath Primary School which will provide a school within walking distance for future residents of the site; and help reduce reliance on car journeys and impact on the local highway network. In addition, there is potential for additional development within this location to incorporate improved pick-up, drop-off, and/or playing field facilities.
- 5.7. Within this area is an existing bus stop serving a route that provide access to Colchester, Maldon, Essex University, and Heybridge, in addition to other areas of the village.
- 5.8. The direction of growth to the south western boundary of the village provides an opportunity to deliver new homes in a location where the strategic highway network can be accessed without having to go through the village, with benefits in terms of minimising local congestion

and impact on air quality. Development within this location also provides opportunity to contribute towards a strategy to provide better north-south links to the west of the village.

- 5.9. We are committed to working positively and constructively with the Parish Council in respect of the development of Land at Maldon Road, Tiptree and the Neighbourhood Plan. However, it should be borne in mind that the NPPF requires the Local Plan to provide an effective, deliverable strategy that will meet housing need (paragraph 182), and one which is sufficiently flexible to respond to changing circumstances (paragraph 14). In the event that a Neighbourhood Plan which allocates sufficient sites to deliver at least 600 new homes fails to materialise it will be important that the Local Plan provides sufficient flexibility to react to such circumstances, to ensure the Borough's housing need can still be met and that sufficient land is available to support the sustainable growth of Tiptree - one of the Borough's most significant settlements.

6. Land at Maldon Road, Tiptree

- 6.1. Land at Maldon Road, Tiptree (SLAA site reference C104 / TIP09) represents a sustainable and deliverable site to accommodate new homes to help meet local housing need and to support the community of Tiptree.
- 6.2. The site measures approximately 10 hectares and is situated to the north west of Maldon Road, on the western side village, adjoining the existing settlement boundary of Tiptree.
- 6.3. The factors that render the area in which this site sits as a suitable and sustainable broad area of growth (as per Policy SS15 and accompanying Policy Map) all apply directly to this site, and this site is ideally placed to be able to realise potential benefits of development in this location.
- 6.4. The site is located immediately opposite Tiptree Heath Primary School. As such, not only will the school be very accessible to future residents of the site by alternatives to the car; the site also has the potential to accommodate improved pick-up / drop-off facilities for the School. Further, it has the potential to accommodate additional playing pitch provision for the School if required.

- 6.5. The site is not subject to any physical constraints that would prohibit its development, nor is it subject to any environmental, ecological or heritage designations that may impact on the deliverability of homes at this location. It is relatively flat and the site's topography is no barrier to development. The site is largely featureless, arable land in use for agriculture and as such is of very limited ecological value.
- 6.6. There is presently no public use of the site, save for public rights of ways near its boundaries. Development of the site has the potential to include new areas of public open space.
- 6.7. The site is being actively promoted by an established house-builder with an excellent track record of delivery high-quality homes in the area, and can be brought forward to help meet housing need in the short / medium term

7. Overview

- 7.1. There is a clear, established need for additional housing in Colchester Borough. It is a requirement of national planning policy (as per the NPPF) that the Local Planning Authority put in place a Local Plan which seeks to meet this objectively assessed housing need in full.
- 7.2. Tiptree is one of the largest settlements within the Borough (below only Colchester in the settlement hierarchy), and benefits from a range of facilities, services, and employment opportunities. It represents a sustainable location for additional growth, and an area to which the Local Plan should direct growth in order to help sustain the vitality of this community.
- 7.3. The Preferred Options directs a proportion of housing growth to Tiptree, and specifies this as a minimum figure. This approach is supported by the SA/SEA that accompanies the Preferred Options. It is important that other policies within the Local Plan support and facilitate the delivery of these homes.
- 7.4. Land at Maldon Road, Tiptree represents a sustainable location to accommodate additional housing and the Preferred Options justifiably identifies the area in which it is located as a broad area of growth.
- 7.5. Whilst we understand that specific sites will be allocated for development through the Neighbourhood Plan (and indeed are committed to working positively with the Parish Council in respect of this) it is critical in respect of the soundness of the plan that it can account for

changes in circumstances – the Local Plan should ensure policies are in place to deliver housing to meet needs in full, and to support the growth of Tiptree, in the event that a Neighbourhood Plan facilitating this does not materialise.