



Local Plan – Colchester Borough

Issues and Options – January 2015
and
Sustainability Appraisal Report – December 2014

Representations

on behalf of

R F West Ltd

In respect of
Land at Stanway

February 2015

AM-P 12010



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1	Site Location Plan
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In October 2014 a response was made to the 'Call for Sites' by Colchester Borough Council in respect of land at Stanway, on behalf of the landowner – R. F. West Ltd. A 'Vision' Document was submitted to promote a site of some 46 hectares of land for the delivery of a mixed use scheme including approximately 1000 new homes, employment, a primary school and public open space/parkland in the form of a 6.5ha country park. A site location plan is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The adopted development plan for Colchester identified Stanway as a Growth Area to deliver some 1800 dwellings (including 800 on greenfield land) plus employment. This Growth Area has largely been built, is under construction or is committed for delivery in the short term.
- 1.3 Part of the site now being promoted lies within the designated Growth Area (this is the subject of an extant planning application by Persimmon for 358 new homes) and the remainder represents a logical extension, now required to meet a significantly increased housing target for the Borough.
- 1.4 The site is highly sustainable in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework. It has excellent access to a range of services and facilities via different modes of transport and is within easy walking distance to most of these. It lies adjacent to existing bus stops.
- 1.5 The proposed development in the form of an extension to the existing urban area will build upon the pattern of growth established by the adopted development plan and would justify extending and enhancing the public transport services in the area.
- 1.6 Proposals for this land at Stanway are well positioned to meet all of the six options for growth proposed in the Issues and Options Document and considered in the related Sustainability Assessment. All of the proposed Growth Options include an element of urban development on sites in and around the existing urban area. Such sites are in short supply due to constraints that exist around the urban edge of Colchester Town, which render urban expansion to be unfeasible.
- 1.7 Sustainable settlement development is therefore considered to be the only realistic option for accommodating the majority of the Borough's growth. We support this strategy for growth and separate representations have been submitted in respect of other land owned by R F West Ltd, to meet the requirement for a large new settlement at Marks Tey. We recognise however that it will be important to ensure that a sufficient range of sites are allocated in addition to any sustainable settlements in order to ensure that the Council can maintain a five year supply of land for housing as national planning policy requires.



2.0 THE PROPOSED PLAN PERIOD, TARGETS FOR GROWTH AND CROSS BOUNDARY ISSUES

- 2.1 We support proposals for the new local plan to look to the year 2032 and ‘beyond’. National guidance states that Local Plans should be drawn up over an appropriate timescale, that this should preferably be a 15-year time horizon, take account of longer term requirements and be kept up to date. The Council has recognised that the only reasonable option for accommodating future growth is in a sustainable settlement development on predominantly greenfield land. We welcome the acceptance of the Council that large-scale housing-led developments will play an important part in meeting growth needs in the Borough and that this will take the form of thousands rather than hundreds of houses that either significantly expand an existing settlement or create a new one and which have major infrastructure requirements. Accommodating the level of growth now required will require a long term vision. This is particularly relevant where the solution to growth lies in large new settlements.
- 2.2 The Council accepts that the need for housing is high. It aims to meet the Government agenda to increase the supply of housing to meet a national housing shortage and the importance of meeting its own objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing in full. It acknowledges that this will result in a need to identify land to accommodate large scale development including housing. Although evidence gathering and the full OAN is still being considered in the light of emerging demographic forecasts and the joint SHMA with the adjoining authorities, this will inform the final growth targets. The Council accepts as an interim measure that this will be “in the region of 1,000 or more dwellings per year”, or 15,000 new homes in the plan period. We support the Council’s proposal to allocate land to accommodate a higher number of homes than the level of housing need identified, in order to plan comprehensively for the longer term – post 2032. The Council accepts that this would also help to ensure maximum sustainability of development, by minimizing the need to find additional sites on a piecemeal basis in the future.
- 2.3 We support the Council’s coordinated approach to planning for growth that recognises the need for a strategic plan to ensure that larger than the local communities is taken into account. The scale of growth supports cooperation between Colchester Borough and adjoining authorities because the single administrative boundary of Colchester may not independently reflect where people live work and travel. Future communities may include those in adjoining authority areas, and in any event Colchester BC will need to consider impacts on local infrastructure and services across administrative boundaries. It is recognised that cross-boundary developments would need to accommodate the joint requirements of both authorities and result in the total housing numbers to be built in and around the Borough boundary being higher than the Borough’s own target.



3.0 THE VISION

- 3.1 In establishing a vision for the next 15 plus years the emerging plan is realistic in accepting that it now has a diminishing supply of brownfield sites to meet its growth requirements going forward. Added to this there are significant constraints around the urban edge of Colchester such as nature conservation sites, archaeological features and flood zones. The Council has not sought to shy away from a radical solution to growth rooted in one or more large scale new settlements.
- 3.2 We support the Council's strategy of clarifying from the outset that sustainable settlement development on greenfield land is the only reasonable or realistic option for accommodating the majority of the Borough's post 2021 growth.
- 3.3 In addition it is recognized that the NPPF requires the Council to maintain a five year supply of specific deliverable housing sites on a rolling basis. Therefore, it will also be important to ensure that a sufficient range of smaller sites are allocated in addition to a larger development site. The reason for this is that larger sites can take longer to come forward and once started can only support the delivery of a limited number of dwellings per year. The allocations of a range of smaller sites will help to ensure that this does not pose a threat to the Council's rolling five year land supply.



4.0 A REVIEW OF THE GROWTH OPTIONS/JUSTIFICATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF LAND AT STANWAY

- 4.1 Support is extended for the Council's proposal to plan for the period beyond 2032, due to its necessary focus upon sustainable settlements on greenfield land and the need to plan comprehensively for such large scale growth. In addition the new settlement approach will allow cross-boundary needs to be met in a coordinated manner. A higher number of homes in one or more holistically planned new settlements will ensure that the Council meets its objectively assessed housing needs and addresses strategic issues under the 'duty to cooperate'. This includes the need to meet housing needs in a wider housing market area and address cross boundary infrastructure provision.
- 4.2 In considering the six options for growth we submit that in order to meet the now significant growth targets for the Borough that the Council need to complement any new settlement with a variety of smaller housing sites in key sustainable locations.
- 4.3 There are compelling reasons in sustainability terms for promoting land for development at Stanway. We set out a justification below:
- The Issues and options Document recognises that it will be important to ensure that a sufficient range of smaller sites are allocated in addition to any sustainable settlement. (page 47). This is because large developments can take longer to come forward, and then can only support the delivery of a certain number of dwellings per year, regardless of their size. The allocation of land at Stanway will help to ensure that there is no threat to the Council's rolling five-year housing land supply.
 - The site is owned and controlled by R F West Ltd and there are no technical or environmental constraints to prevent development. The site meets all the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF and is available, suitable and deliverable to contribute towards meeting the Borough's housing need in the early stages of the plan period.
 - All six options for growth proposed in the Issues and Options Document identify a need for development sites around Colchester's existing urban area. This forms a vital element in meeting future growth needs and would be satisfied by the proposed development site at Stanway.
 - Stanway has a range of services catering for everyday needs, and the site is within walking distance of these. In addition it is served by bus stops on routes providing direct links to neighbouring towns and to two mainline railway stations. The site is therefore in a sustainable location for residential development in accordance with current national government policy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Indeed page 48 of the Issues and Options Document recognises that "urban development has the potential to make the best use of the existing network of public transport services as long as it is accessible and frequent." Access to a wide range of facilities and excellent transport links make this site one of the most sustainable locations in the Borough to accommodate growth.
 - The proposals for development offer an opportunity to not only deliver circa 1000 new dwellings including affordable homes to meet the Borough's needs, but also bring a range of other benefits. The proposed mixed use scheme would complement the existing mix of residential and commercial uses and meet the need for a two form entry primary school. Proposed public open space/parkland would be located to protect views from the existing residential properties in



Turkey Cock Lane along the western edge of the site and provide an open green buffer to prevent coalescence between Stanway and Copford. This area of proposed open space will utilise a part of the site that is relatively steep and less accessible. It will also enhance the character and quality of the area. The 6.5 hectares area of new parkland together with retention and enhancement of existing hedgerows will create green links and attractive footpaths though the site. Strategic planting along the northern edge of the site will serve as an acoustic barrier.

- A key objective of the emerging plan is to protect the significance and setting of important landscapes and ensure that countryside areas and strategic green gaps between settlements are not eroded. The proposed development site offers the opportunity to create a permanent green buffer to the west of the site and prevent the coalescence of Stanway and Copford.



5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- The emerging plan confirms that the only reasonable option for accommodating future growth in the Colchester Borough is in sustainable settlement development on predominantly greenfield land.
- As part of this spatial strategy for growth, development on smaller sites, in sustainable locations in and around the existing urban area, is key to meeting housing growth targets and ensuring that a five year supply of housing land is maintained.
- Proposals for land at Stanway within the ownership of R F West Ltd are well placed to meet this requirement whilst continuing to maintain and enhance the natural and built environment of the Borough.