

Preferred Options Local Plan 2025 Section 2 Vision and approach to Local Plan Objections - Andrew Mowbray

2.7

2.7 says “Essex is the most water stressed county in the country. The situation is expected to get worse due to climate change, population growth and the need to restore, protect and enhance the natural environment.” Yet CCC are proposing 20,800 new dwellings. There is no mention in the Preferred Options Local Plan 2025 as to where the water is the water to come from to supply all these dwellings.

2.14

The city expanding into the surrounding countryside which form part of its jurisdiction, turning villages into featureless suburbs in the urban sprawl of Greater Colchester, was a predicted negative outcome of the bid for city status and the Preferred Options Local Plan 2025 shows this is what Colchester City Council is now seeking to achieve.

This view is supported by the fact that in December 2024, Colchester City Council submitted a response to the Government’s New Towns Taskforce Call for Evidence, identifying Marks Tey as a location worth exploring for significant growth. It was done without the knowledge of most Councillors, it was never discussed at the Local Plan Committee, or at any other public meeting, and even the senior Councillor in charge of Planning was either not aware of it or not supportive. No public consultation took place. It was the action of one planning officer acting with one senior councillor. It was only brought to public notice by a Freedom of Information request.

It was never clear if the 20,000 houses it would lead to, would count towards the Council’s housing target anyway. It was only withdrawn because once subjected to public scrutiny it was found those responsible for submitting it had no authority to do so. This action clearly shows that prejudice in favour of large-scale development at Marks Tey exists with certain senior officers and councillors at Colchester City Council so even before any other objections are taken into account, on this basis alone any proposal for the Marks Tey Growth Area /New Town should be permanently withdrawn from the Preferred Options Local Plan 2025.

2.21

Developments such as those proposed in PP17 and PP18 do nothing to “Protect stretches of undeveloped countryside, enhance the quality of natural environment creating net gains to biodiversity.” Quite the opposite, large so called garden communities or growth areas, which in reality are new towns, will achieve the opposite to this ambition.

2.19

Growth is not inevitable and should be resisted at all costs. The population is declining and the Government by their recent own admission are not setting annual targets for housing but expect them to be achieved by the end of this parliament. It is widely reported that this will not be achievable. The Government are also unable to

justify the overall housing target they have set. It is said that there is a need for affordable and social housing and this may well be the case. However, developers will and are already doing everything they can to avoid building these. They also do everything they can to get out of any promised infrastructure or community enhancements linked to their schemes. They prefer large three or more bedroom “executive” houses which are very expensive. These do nothing to solve the so called “housing crisis”.

They deliberately build at a slow rate and sit on planning permissions to throttle supply and keep demand, and therefore prices, high so they can increase their profits which is their only motivation. If they don’t continually build, they go bust. Development on greenfield sites is purely so the landowner can profit by selling to developers and the developers can profit from building. Building on green field sites is also more profitable than brownfield sites as the latter require clearance and sometimes decontamination.

This plan achieves neither of the objectives defined in the vision statement of 2.19. If the Government and the Council were genuine in their desire to provide affordable housing, they would not be putting forward these proposals, which only fill the pockets of landowners and developers. Instead, they would be proposing to build high quality council homes, which are in keeping with their surroundings and have adequate infrastructure built with them. These would be available to rent or buy with an at cost council mortgage. They would not be available for housing associations from areas outside of the Colchester City region or other councils to buy. They would only be available for those on the local housing list. When Colchester City Council is abolished, the new authority, should continue to offer them only to those on the housing list from the former Colchester City Council area.