

Ref. Application 200723 Land off Colchester Road West Mersea

Reason for Comment: Object to the proposal

Comment: A very significant number of detailed comments from the community have been received by West Mersea Town Council on this topic and West Mersea Town Council endorses the public's concerns and therefore recommends that consent is **NOT** granted to this planning application. The reasons are as follows:

Prematurity: In the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019 paragraphs 59-50 (page 14) premature applications are specifically discussed.

The Colchester Borough Council (CBC) Emerging Local Plan is at an advanced stage, it has already been submitted, therefore the justification to refuse is clearly given in paragraph 49 as both sub terms a). "...to grant permission would undermine the planning process..." and b). "the emerging plan is at an advanced stage but is not yet formally part of the development plan for the area" are fulfilled.

The West Mersea Neighbourhood Plan has now progressed to preparation of a Draft Plan and granting permission for this application would therefore "prejudice the outcome of the plan making process" – NPPF February 2019 paragraph 50 (page 15).

Lack of Conformity:

- i. This application is **NOT** in conformity with the CBC Emerging Local Plan. It is also **NOT** in conformity with the developing West Mersea Neighbourhood Plan which is following the NPPF February 2019 paragraph 29 (page 10) and respective footnote (16).
- ii. This application conflicts with Policy ENV1, which states that the Borough will conserve and enhance Colchester's natural & historic environment, countryside & coastline. The policy also states development within the Coastal Protection Belt will not be permitted that would adversely affect its open and rural character.
- iii. This application conflicts with Policy DP1, which states that all development must respect its landscape setting and contribute to the surrounding area.
- iv. This application conflicts with Policy DP23, which states that development within the Coastal Protection Belt will only be supported if it would not be significantly detrimental to the landscape character of the area:
 - a. Within the Coastal Protection Belt and along the undeveloped coast, an integrated approach to coastal management will be promoted and, development will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that it:
 - i. Requires a coastal location and is located within the developed area of the coast;
 - ii. Will **not be** significantly detrimental to conserving important nature conservation, historic environment assets, maritime uses and the landscape character of the coast;
 - iii. Will deliver or sustain social and economic benefits considered important to the wellbeing of the coastal communities; and

- iv. Provides opportunities and scope for adaptation to climate change.
- v. It would be contrary to the National Planning Policy regarding protecting the Island's character which is key to achieving sustainable development.

Pedestrian Access: West Mersea Town Council has grave concerns around the safety and suitability of the proposed pedestrian access, since the pathways leading to the site are very narrow. Further, the Colchester Road site is on a very infrequent bus service that only runs hourly from 0937 until 13.37 and therefore the siting of a new surgery on this site is totally inappropriate to an ageing demographic who will rely on bus access to any surgery.

Strategic Land Availability Assessment: In Colchester Borough Council's own 'Strategic Land Availability Document 2' (June 2017) - pp. 72 – it states that this site (MER06), failed on Sieve 1 and Sieve 2 and was marked in RED as "*wholly unsuitable.*"

Loss of agricultural land: This site is valuable Grade 2 agricultural land, and accordingly should not be lost to development.

Summary: the Council cannot support this application given the adverse effect it will have on the character of the Island:

- The site is located in a very prominent position which forms a key part of the Island's landscape structure and sense of place
- Developing this site would breach both the West Mersea Settlement Boundary and the Borough's Coastal Protection Belt policy
- These breaches would damage two of the Island's high value views and the landscape setting which are important to the homecoming, health and wellbeing of the community
- It would introduce urbanisation in a location which would have a detrimental effect on the Island's natural beauty, open coastal views and its rural character
- Development of this site would result in yet a further loss of the Island's good quality agricultural land when arable farming is needed to combat global warming.

In conclusion, there are strong Local Authority and National Planning Policies which should protect this island's natural beauty from inappropriate housing development. Housing on this site would be highly visible across the Strood Estuary and would do irreparable damage to the unspoilt natural view of the Island from the Mainland, a view held dear for generations.