



TOLLESBURY
PARISH
COUNCIL

Our ref: TPC/797-23/MC
Date: 15^h December 2023

Mr R Holmes
Director of Service Delivery
Maldon District Council
Princes Road
Maldon
Essec CM9

Dear Mr Holmes,

I am writing this open letter on behalf of Tollesbury Parish Council to represent the concerns being expressed by many people in the village about the continuing uncertainties surrounding local planning.

QUESTION

As explained below, we would be most grateful if you could respond with an update on progress with the review of the Local Development Plan (LDP), and confirmation of the position in respect of Maldon's five-year housing land supply (5HLS).

BACKGROUND

Under the Localism Act 2011 communities are given direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. People are aware that decisions on planning applications ought to be made using both a local plan and a neighbourhood plan.

Since the Secretary of State approved the Maldon local plan in 2017, the residents of Tollesbury have been preparing a draft neighbourhood plan.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The neighbourhood planning process has been frustrated by various factors, some local, some relating to issues involving the review of the LDP. In 2020, bearing in mind advice from MDC officers, the parish council paused work on the neighbourhood plan to await the outcome of the review of the LDP.

In 2023, the parish council initiated an update of the Housing Needs Survey and began to prepare to resume work on the neighbourhood plan.

Residents were concerned to learn from media reports last month that MDC has been found to be unable to demonstrate a 5HLS at appeal. The parish council has since received conflicting assurances so we would be grateful if you could confirm the true situation.



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The uncertainty lends further encouragement to developers to take advantage of the National Planning Policy Framework's presumption in favour of development.

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Tollesbury is bounded on three sides by the sea, so in practical terms development is only feasible to the west. The limitations of the road network, public transport and other infrastructure govern the scope for development at scale.

Nevertheless, two surveys of local housing needs over the past six years, assisted by RCCE, have confirmed that residents are supportive of modest development.

However alarm is being caused by successive applications for larger-scale developments that would extend the village boundary and are likely to be unsustainable within existing limitations on infrastructure.

Gladman's proposals gave rise to a record number of letters of objection from residents. Similar levels of objection have been lodged against Obsidian which is awaiting planning consideration.

There is little doubt that the recent Welbeck proposals will be met with corresponding opposition from residents. Concerns have been expressed that the public response time for the application spans the Christmas and New Year break. It is likely that there will be requests for more time to respond.

LOCAL CONCERNS

Residents are proactive in their determination to resist excessive development that jeopardises the character of the village and the quality of life for residents.

To help fend off inappropriate development proposals, the community would like greater confidence in the LDP and the 5HLS so that the neighbourhood plan can be made. People are aware of the pressures on small planning team in MDC and there is no wish to exacerbate the situation faced by officers.

INTENTION

Supported by a working group of residents and with evidence from the two housing needs surveys, the Parish Council intends to publish in February 2024, for consultation within the community, a draft framework of the key elements that would be included in the neighbourhood plan, as and when one can be produced. Ideally, for example, the village would like to see a limited scale community led housing project in the mix.

The framework aims to increase local understanding of the issues and would form the basis of the formal neighbourhood plan once there is sufficient confidence in the 5HLS and the LDP.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Your early response to our question at the head of this letter will be an important consideration within the ongoing work in the village on the framework of our neighbourhood plan.

The village has enjoyed the engagement and support of both of its District Councillors and the cooperation of your staff through recent years. The concerns addressed in this open letter are about uncertainties surrounding the processes, not the quality of local representation.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Plater" followed by a horizontal line.

Simon Plater
Chairman – Tollesbury Parish Council