

Comments for Planning Application 17/02246/OUT

Application Summary

Application Number: 17/02246/OUT

Address: Land North Of Colchester Road Coggeshall Essex

Proposal: Outline application for the construction of up to 335 dwellings (including up to 40% affordable) without a Class C2 care home or up to 318 dwellings with a Class C2 care home (up to 80 beds); nursery/community facilities (420m²) and provision of access, roads, drainage infrastructure, open space and strategic landscaping. Demolition of existing garage/ workshop building.

Case Officer: Mr Timothy Havers

Customer Details

Name: Ms Parish Clerk

Address: 25 Stoneham Street, Coggeshall, Essex CO6 1UH

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Parish Council

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: PLANNING OBJECTION - COGGESHALL PARISH COUNCIL

Coggeshall Parish Council wishes to object to the above application. The Council believes that it is not in accordance with the Braintree District Council Interim Planning Policy, lying outside of the development envelope on land that is not one of the strategic site allocations. Further, there are areas within the application that do not conform to the core planning principles for sustainable development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

A development of this size is not sustainable and would generate serious pressures on the service provision to Coggeshall. This amount of extra new homes would equate to a 20% increase in population. Coggeshall is of historic importance with 239 listed properties, one of the highest concentrations of historic buildings in Essex.

The Parish Council believe the application should be refused as it is not sustainable.

Para 14 of the NPPF says "At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development"

Para 7 says "There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- an economic role - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- a social role - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental role - contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy."

With regard to the above, the Parish Council would like to respond as follows:-

- Economic role: there is almost no provision for new infrastructure, for instance - instead the development relies on existing infrastructure, which is already sub-standard and overloaded. There is also the loss of thriving local business which is well used by the community.
- Social role: the development does not support a strong, vibrant and healthy community. It is not required to meet the needs of present and future generations (emerging Local Plan). The site design is poor (the opposite of a high quality built environment), and the extremely limited number of entry points would cut the development off from the rest of the village (the opposite of supporting a vibrant community). Local services such as health are already overloaded. Moreover such services as there are, are in the village centre so in practice would not be accessible other than by car, when there is already a shortage of parking in the village centre.
- Environmental role: far from contributing to protecting or enhancing the natural, built or historic environment, the development would damage the environment. The loss of the countryside buffer between the A120 and the medieval village centre (historic environment); poor site design (built environment); loss of animals and birds to which the farmland is home (natural environment/biodiversity). The excessive car use that the development encourages both directly (distance from and shortage of local services) and indirectly (because of poor public transport) is contrary to the policy of mitigating climate change and moving to a low carbon economy.

Secondly, it is the Parish Council's opinion that the adverse impacts of allowing the development significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of refusing it.

Our objections are further detailed below:-

Landscape, Heritage and Ecology

The site is a significant feature of the eastern landscape of Coggeshall, providing a countryside buffer between the A120 and the medieval village centre and is currently fertile farmland. It is also

home to a variety of small animals and birds, vital to the ecology of the parish. It occupies an elevated location in Coggeshall and would impact on the presence whereby the historic parish church (one of the largest in Essex) is a prominent feature of the landscape from the edges of the community.

The site is traversed by the "Essex Way" which is a historic footpath which follows the course of Stane Street an historic Roman Road from St Albans to Colchester. It is our view that this historic route should be preserved in its natural state for future generations.

Coggeshall works well as a community due to the central location of the services such as doctors, shops, library, pubs and restaurants within walking distance for most residents. Many of these services have limited room for expansion, however relocation to the outskirts of the parish should be avoided at all costs as this would result in a loss of the community feel to the area.

Highways, Transport and Parking

The A120 is regarded as being one of the most dangerous roads in England as identified by the Road Safety Foundation in 2010. Current plans to re-route the stretch between Braintree and Marks Tey are in the very early stages. An additional 335 new homes would equate to a potential additional 1,000 car movements in and around Coggeshall. With the A120 often being gridlocked from Great Notley to Marks Tey, this would exacerbate the situation. There have been fatal accidents on the road before, so this would also potentially lead to further loss of life and serious injury. We note that the developer places the blame for these accidents on driver error and whilst this may be correct we feel the frustration and impatience felt by drivers trying to exit from Coggeshall is surely caused by lack of gaps in continuous traffic and is further proof of the inadequacy of the A120, even for present requirements. This is further exacerbated by the poor design of the junctions which causes driver confusion.

Coggeshall has a small public car park in the centre which is used by residents without off road parking, visitors and workers. This car park is very often oversubscribed and has resulted in a reduction of tourist trade and this has affected some of the local businesses in the centre. At one point, Coggeshall had over 26 antique shops which were a big attraction for the tourist trade. Over time, the shops have been closed and turned into residential homes as visitors are unable to park in the centre. The location of this site on the very outskirts, just under a mile from the centre, would make it unlikely that residents of the development would walk into Coggeshall, putting further pressure on the car park. Additionally, many of the pavements in Coggeshall are narrower than the normal required width or non-existent and not conducive to walking.

The Parish Council are also concerned with the single access for the whole site. It is noted that an "emergency access" is provided from Tey Road, however the limited visibility when turning right from this road would be hazardous and should not be permitted.

Coggeshall is currently served by two local bus services. The Community Bus is a not for profit service with just 16 seats. It runs at peak times from the centre of Coggeshall to Kelvedon. Often the bus is full, which means a number of people have to wait for the next trip, which will again be full and more people will once again have to wait. The drivers are all local volunteers and the group often struggles to find enough helpers. The stops for the bus are all at least a 10-15 minute walk away from the development, if not more, and it is unlikely many residents of the development would walk to the stops. If they drove, it would further add to the oversubscription of the car park mentioned above, and if they decided to drive straight to the station.

A bus service also runs between Chelmsford - Braintree - Coggeshall and Colchester. However this service has recently been cut resulting in no buses running after 8.00 pm in the evening making it impossible for anyone to enjoy the amenities of the local area after this time. This bus service is also unreliable, having to travel the A120 which is often gridlocked or occasionally closed due to accidents or ongoing roadworks.

Coggeshall in the past did benefit from a bus service to Stansted Airport; however this was withdrawn many years ago due to difficulty in the bus negotiating the narrow streets and parked cars.

It would be expected that many of the new residents may use the rail service to access employment in London and other connected locations. The current service is already over capacity at peak times and the car park at Kelvedon is also often full. Furthermore, this would add to the cars on the roads at peak times in the morning.

Flooding and Water

We are advised that the Coggeshall Water Recycling Centre is at 98% of its capacity. A new housing development on this scale will cause the sewage works to breach its permit and too high nutrient load would enter and pollute the River Blackwater.

Whilst the proposed site is not located on a flood plain, Coggeshall has suffered flooding on many recent occasions. East Street, which is a continuation West of the Colchester Road, suffered serious flooding in 2014 and flash flooding in 2016. We understand that balancing ponds will be provided on the proposed site to deal with the extra run-off created by the development, but this will not alleviate the current flooding issues in the centre of Coggeshall. Additionally, we are advised that many of the properties in Coggeshall have combined surface and foul water systems, many dating back a number of decades, which are at capacity.

Site design

The Parish Council has concerns with the design and layout of the site. Firstly, the tandem parking arrangements for the properties would not work in practice as residents will leave vehicles on the

street to avoid having to move them to access a vehicle parked behind.

Additionally, if the outline proposal is examined in detail, the size of the properties on the layout plan seems disproportionately small in comparison to the adjacent existing properties and we would therefore question the scale and the density.

The Parish Council would also question the need for the provision of a nursery to the site and also the location of the care home, adjacent to the outer boundary, near the A120, which would not provide a quiet and restful location. If an amenity was to be provided, the community would benefit from a public swimming pool and gym as the local facilities are situated over four miles away.

We understand that this is an outline planning application, but more detail should be provided on the scale, density and design before it proceeds. As Coggeshall is made up of a number of small developments that have been built over time, it has a great deal of character. This single development would by far be the largest Coggeshall has experienced and would change the nature of Coggeshall. It has an urban estate feel, which is incongruous with Coggeshall, as a large, rural and medieval village.

Loss of Business

It is proposed that an existing business of a garage and workshop is to be demolished to create the main access to the site with no plans to offer an alternative site. This is a thriving business which employs five local people and is used by many local residents. The loss of this enterprise would have a marked effect on the community causing residents to travel to other locations to have their vehicles serviced and repaired.

Infrastructure

A development of this size would have serious impact on the local infrastructure and services. Many of which are already under pressure:

Doctors

The local surgery is often notifying residents that they are unable to accept any new patients. The surgery is located in the centre of Coggeshall, which makes it accessible to most residents by foot. It also has a limited car park, and patients often have to park in the larger car park, which as noted several times above, is often oversubscribed. A relocation of the surgery to an area other than a central location should therefore be avoided, however it is difficult to expand on the existing site.

Hospitals

Looking further afield into local hospital services, The King's Fund provides statistics on the average number of hospital beds per 1,000 population in England, which stands at 2.6 beds. Currently in both Colchester and Chelmsford, this stands at only 2 hospital beds per 1,000

population, which for Colchester, equates to a shortfall of 200 hospital beds compared with the national average.

Colchester hospital is regularly on "black alert" and routine operations are frequently postponed. The Parish Council believe that these should be addressed urgently before large scale developments are agreed.

Schools

Coggeshall benefits from a local primary and a secondary school. The primary school at St Peter is very close to capacity and could not accommodate a large development at this site. Coggeshall has three sites identified in the local plan and these extra homes will probably cover the small predicted surplus of spaces.

Honywood, the local secondary school is close to capacity with only 11 spaces in 2014/15 and is predicted to be over its capacity within the next few years.

Taking into consideration all the above points, Coggeshall Parish Council confirm their objection to this application.