



GREAT MAPLESTEAD PARISH COUNCIL



Clerk: Mrs Ann Crisp, New House, St Giles Close, Great Maplestead, Essex CO9 2RW

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FAO: Alan Massow
Principal Planning Officer
Braintree District Council
Causeway House
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23rd August 2024

Dear Mr Massow,

Braintree DC Local Plan Review – Sites Submitted August 2024

The Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the current review of the Local Plan, and the recent Call for Sites.

Following a recent informal consultation with parishioners the Council has the following observations and comments:

Policy Considerations

It is noted that Braintree District Council has committed that when reviewing development boundaries as part of the Local Plan Review, “*development will be focused in those settlement areas that are most sustainable and provide local services/facilities to meet day to day needs.*” Furthermore, Policy SP1 & NPPF - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development – “.*to secure development that improves economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.*”

This is particularly pertinent to Great Maplestead, which in terms of planning is a Tier 3 village and considered unsustainable, with total reliance on other local towns and villages for key services and facilities. Therefore, any proposed new development would conflict directly with these two aspects of national and local planning policy.

In addition to the restrictions of the planning policy measures, the parish also feels very strongly that there should be no proposed increase to housing stock within Great Maplestead until there is improved/new infrastructure and transportation.

The village has seen the withdrawal of its scheduled bus service in recent months and whilst replaced with an on-demand service this does not meet the needs of those needing to access specific appointments.

Without regular, reliable transport systems reliance on private forms of transport is essential for those in rural villages but with the lack of a suitable cycle network, roads that contain national speed limits and a lack of pavements, use of a private motor vehicle is essential. This conflicts with Local Plan SP3 sustainable development principles “.*development locations are accessible by a choice of means and travel.*”

The Great Maplestead primary school is now over-subscribed, with the majority of existing pupils travelling in from neighbouring villages and towns. This would also mean any families with young children moving into the proposed development areas would have to find school places for their children outside the village. As already mentioned, with a lack of public transport, walking or cycling options this would inevitably mean using private cars and/or taxis for the school run, putting extra traffic on to an already inadequate road infrastructure.

Increased traffic through the village, both personal and commercial, has seen a deterioration in road surfaces, creating hazards in some areas and accidents have occurred.

It is acknowledged that investment in the road network is required across the district but, with Tier 3 villages most likely to be at the bottom of the priority list, it is unreasonable to suggest placing any increased traffic on to the road network by introducing new developments, until such time as money is available to significantly improve the condition of local highways.

Call For Sites:

GRMA2167 – Lucking Street. Mixed Purpose

The Council opposes the potential for development at this location due to reasons of unsustainability and environmental and social impacts. The parish is nervous of the uncertainty of a Mixed Use proposition and what this ultimately could mean.

The road infrastructure would be unable to cope with any increase in traffic, with particular concerns regarding potential commercial traffic movements that may be associated with any possible industrial/commercial development in the future.

The location of this site near to the junction of Lucking Street & Toldishall Road causes concern for highway safety, as this narrow junction already suffers congestion from regularly parked vehicles from neighbouring properties, which creates a hazard for all road users. Additionally, Toldishall Rd is due to be designated as a new Quiet Lane, which could force more traffic into Lucking Street as an alternative route of travel through the village.

GRMA2168 – Long Fen, Church Street – Housing

The Council opposes the potential for development at this location due to reasons of unsustainability and environmental and social impacts.

As with site GRMA2168 the parish has concerns regarding the local road infrastructure which would not cope with any increase in traffic from new development.

The location of this site sits adjacent to Toldishall Rd, which is due to be designated as a new Quiet Lane. Any new development here would result in initially construction, and subsequently more residential traffic, being forced to use Purls Hill, a historic, single track lane with few passing places or Church Street, which already suffers from congestion caused by parked cars where homes do not have sufficient off-street parking capacity. This congestion is further compounded twice a day by an influx of school traffic as the village primary school is located in Church Street.

Development at this site has been considered and rejected a number of times previously, as part of the Local Plan process, but also via several planning appeals.

Previous reasons for rejection still remain.

- This site is an unsustainable location and functionally isolated with a reliance on neighbouring towns and villages for key services.

- Access to key services and facilities are beyond a reasonable walking distance along roads that contain national speed limits and lack pavements or lighting, which also restricts cycling as an option, thus occupiers of the proposed new development would be reliant on the use of private motor vehicles.
- BDC's Drainage Engineers have stated that, in the past, there have been surface water issues with the brook running through this site and that any development there would need to be above the water level, effectively reducing the useable development area.

Both proposed locations sit within a rural, agricultural community, which sees daily commercial traffic movements for the agricultural businesses it supports. With an increase in the size of vehicles, both commercially and privately, the parishes narrow, unlit rural lanes, which lack pavements and are subject only to the national speed limit (60mph), are becoming increasingly dangerous to navigate, especially for pedestrians and cyclists, not to mention the many horse riders in this area. Recent incidents have involved cyclists being dismounted by uneven road surfaces in desperate need of repair and motor vehicles and boundary fences being damaged by passing heavy goods vehicles.

Proposed Development Site Density

The 56 houses that BDC's metric suggests these two proposed sites could support is way in excess of the density of housing per hectare in the rest of the village: developments of this density would not only increase the size of the existing habitation by over a third but would, using BDC's 2.3 cars per household metric, introduce nearly 130 more private cars into the village that would be forced to use a road system which is already inadequate for current levels of vehicle use.

In summary, the Parish Council cannot support placing any further demand on its rural road network, alongside the negative environmental and social impacts and possible detrimental effects on valued landscapes that any potential new developments would bring.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Ann Crisp
Clerk