

## **Abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies**

### **Implications for the Core Strategy**

#### **Recommendation from Hockley Parish Plan Group**

Hockley Parish Plan Group (HPPG) believes that the abolition of regional spatial strategies will provide Rochford District Council with the opportunity to replace the Core Strategy with a plan that is more feasible in terms of infrastructure, more transparent to both residents and businesses, and more resident friendly with reference to retaining the greenbelt and countryside that makes the district a highly desirable place to live.

Although HPPG is mainly interested in the central region of Rochford district (Hockley, Hawkwell, Ashingdon and Rochford), the recommendations apply equally to the outskirts of the district (Rawreth, Rayleigh, Hullbridge to the west and Great Wakering to the east).

#### **Infrastructure**

The majority of houses proposed in the Core Strategy are to the east of Rayleigh. It is essential that a feasible plan for highways and traffic to the east of Rayleigh is established by Rochford District Council and Essex County Council, and in place before any major housing developments.

The main arteries throughout Hockley, Hawkwell and Rochford (B1013, Spa Road, Southend Road, Rectory Road and Hall Road) are highly utilised, especially during peak hours. They are not only used by local residents but as a through route for people living to the east of Rochford as a short cut and to avoid the A127. These roads were constructed when the districts were villages, and are single lane in each direction with minimal overtaking opportunities that are required to avoid the chaos created by a mix of traffic including delivery trucks, waste collection vehicles, vans, cars, bicycles and horses. There is restricted pavement space for pedestrians and no space for cycle paths.

In addition, the five railway bridges in Rayleigh (Hambro Hill), Hockley (Church Road and Spa Road), Hawkwell (Rectory Road) and Rochford (Hall Road) were constructed when the districts were villages and traffic was negligible. They are all very narrow with little or no opportunity for widening. The bridge in Rectory Road is so narrow that it is controlled by traffic lights, allowing traffic to pass in one direction at a time. The pavements under the bridges are very narrow and dangerous for pedestrians, especially for prams, children and mobility vehicles.

Other infrastructure concerns that are easier to overcome but must be considered include:

- Doctor/Dentist to patient ratios that are already the worst in South East Essex
- Provision of additional school places
- Provision of drainage and sewage facilities
- Provision of utilities e.g. gas, water, electricity
- Provision of services e.g. waste removal, highway maintenance, street cleaning
- Provision of adequate parking facilities

#### **Transparency**

The method used for assessing the need for extra housing plus the method used to establish the allocation of locations and sites within locations must be logical and clearly defined.

The number of houses per location must be shown in total with more detail for residents and not 'hidden' in appendices. There are two clear examples of this in the Core Strategy.

The majority of residents in Hockley have been led to believe that only 50 additional houses are planned, all to the west of the town. In reality there are 200 houses planned for Hockley, i.e. four times the number shown in the tables. The 50 houses shown in the tables do not include the 150 proposed for Eldon Way/Foundry Industrial Estates which are shown in an appendix.

A similar situation exists with the Rayleigh numbers. The numbers shown in the table do not include 230 houses planned for Rawreth Industrial Estate, i.e. about 40% higher than the number recognised by the majority of Rayleigh/Rawreth residents.

Both these scenarios lead to the loss of considerable greenbelt in other areas to provide new Industrial Estates.

### **Countryside**

The central locations of Rochford district are highly desirable residential areas due to the lovely countryside which includes woods, footpaths, bridleways, nature reserves, farmland and other open spaces. Whereas the individual locations used to be villages in a rural setting, they have grown into small towns in a semi-rural setting.

Further housing development consistent with the numbers shown in the Core Strategy will destroy the habitat and lead to urbanisation of the district. This has been overlooked by the planning department. There are many more appropriate locations in the Rochford district that could be chosen that would not destroy natural countryside to the same degree, and must be considered in the selection of locations in the new Core Strategy.

Tim Gleadall  
Vice Chairman  
Hockley Parish Plan Group