

HAWKWELL PARISH COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO ROCHFORD CORE STRATEGY – April 2010.

The Parish Council believes that the Rochford Core Strategy (RCS) is not sound as it not sustainable, flexible, or deliverable.

The area action plans for Hockley, Rayleigh and Rochford have not been completed and, although the approval has been given for the extension of the runway at London Southend Airport the Joint Area Action Plan has not been finalised. Some of the housing scheduled for erection on industrial estates that are to be vacated and relocated to new employment sites in the greenbelt surrounding the airport and west Rayleigh relies on a great deal of investment, disruption of the businesses involved and increased congestion for the traffic moving around the district to get to the new employment sites. We believe it is highly unlikely ever to be delivered.

Hawkwell Parish Council has objected to the identification of the parish as a subset of Hockley. The people who live in west Hawkwell fiercely assert their distinction from Hockley and to group them into one settlement and then deposit 100% of the housing for that artificial settlement into west Hawkwell is hardly conducive to sustaining a community identity.

The stated Government policy of usage of 60% of brown field sites and 40% greenfield sites has not been met, indeed it seems to have been reversed with most of the housing and employment land being released from the greenbelt. This is acknowledged in the RCS but is justified to avoid 'town cramming' and the adverse effects that this is having on the attractiveness and character of many neighbour hoods across the district. The proposals for west Hawkwell would have just the same effect with possibly 170 homes crammed into one site. Up to 170 houses could result in around a 25% increase in population of this part of the village, we would argue that this is a prime example of 'town cramming' The housing allocation for West Hawkwell in the RCS is not sound as it fails to meet the criteria set out in PPS12 for sustainability. There is only very limited public transport in the area resulting in the use of the private car for travel to schools, shops and the rail station (which is a considerable distance from the nearest point of the site identified). The detrimental effect on our already badly congested roads would be horrendous.

The District Council acknowledges that West Rayleigh is the most suitable area for expansion because of ease of access to major routes such as A127 and A130 yet proposes no increase in housing until post 2015. We would suggest that the issues of sustainability and thus soundness would better achieved by the development of a single new settlement to the west of Rayleigh where the necessary infrastructure can be easily and more economically provided.

We contend that the RCS is unsound because, to establish soundness it has to provide a credible and transparent evidence base. In particular we note that the RCS should consist of evidence of the views of the local community and others who may

have a stake in the future of the area. We do not accept that Rochford have made anywhere near sufficient effort to ensure transparency and accessibility of these documents to the local community. Certainly we have seen no clear evidence that the views expressed by the people of Hawkwell, who have had to work extremely hard to access and understand the proposals, have in anyway influenced the outcomes now put forward by Rochford. In short we contend that the core strategy does not demonstrate any real participation by our residents and therefore fails the test of soundness.

Also the development of the amount of housing would result in the excessive loss of trees and hedgerows and would change the overarching rural character of this part of Hawkwell. Therefore we believe that allocation proposed for Hawkwell should be removed from the plan as it has no social or economic benefit to the community.

The cumulative effect of the proposed development sites for Rochford, ie Hall Road, Ashingdon Rd, and Rectory Rd, (all being pursued in advance of the finalisation of the RCS) will, along with the expansion of London Southend airport and its environs all cause heavy congestion on the highway network without any evidence of the infrastructure improvements necessary to alleviate the problems being planned or being deliverable.

In conclusion we contend that the Core Strategy is unsound when tested against the relevant guidance in PPS 12.

Hawkwell Parish Council