



## THE HANOVER LAND TRUST

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The Core Strategy Examining Inspector  
c/o Lissa Higby  
Programme Officer  
Rochford District Council  
Core Strategy Examination  
Council Offices  
South Street  
Rochford  
Essex SS4 1BW

29th June 2010

Dear Mrs Higby

**PARTICIPATING REPRESENTOR VIEWPOINTS ON THE CORE STRATEGY  
TO THE EXAMINING INSPECTOR, IN RELATION TO THE PROPOSED  
ABOLITION OF REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIC HOUSING QUOTAS**

Thank you for your letter of 14th June 2010 giving notification of the new central Government's commitment to abolish Regional Spatial Strategies, which will place the responsibility for housing supply entirely on local Councils.

As participating respondents concerning the Rochford District Core Strategy, we enclose our views regarding the implications for the Core Strategy as requested, for the Examining Inspector.

Should you have any queries or require any further information, we would be pleased to attend any meeting you may deem appropriate. We would also be grateful if you would please be good enough to keep us informed of subsequent developments.

Yours sincerely

**SPENCER WELSH**  
Managing Trustee

**Encl.**



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### **THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT CORE STRATEGY**

**25th June 2010**

### **PARTICIPATING REPRESENTOR VIEWPOINTS ON THE CORE STRATEGY TO THE EXAMINING INSPECTOR, IN RELATION TO THE POSSIBLE ABOLITION OF REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGIC HOUSING QUOTAS**

#### **Background**

The Rochford District Core Strategy housing quotas have been set based on national census and other statistical information provided by central Government to accommodate current population trends and for the future sustainability of particular regions. Much detailed assessment and planning of how these quotas would be introduced over the next 10 to 15 years and how they would affect the infra-structure of local neighbourhoods has been carried out by Rochford District Council at considerable public expense, resulting in a well established plan now in it's final stages.

The new national coalition Government has notified local Councils such as Rochford that these quotas may now be disregarded. To date two amendments have been announced to National Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing) which simply appear to cancel each other out. Notwithstanding further possible changes to Government planning policy, it may now seem appropriate for Rochford Council to review the numbers of dwellings proposed in the Core Strategy if it is considered that the requirements therein have been imposed on the district unjustifiably. If this proves to be the case, Essex County Council and Rochford District Council are in these circumstances, the best adjudicators of whether this is so, but will surely be dependant on the same established information that decided the quotas in the first place. Surely an unnecessary and expensive exercise with the CS Plan having already evolved to the present late stage.

However, if the quotas set in the Core strategy are to be revised it may be deduced that this will possibly mean less housing, not more, being constructed for the future sustainability of the Rochford district. We strongly feel that this would be counter productive and should be avoided for the following reasons.

#### **The relevant past**

The history of housing availability for the wider market in the UK is principally to be deplored, accepting our standing as one of the foremost liberated, and developed civilised European nations.

Before WWII many types of housing accommodation were permitted to be constructed almost anywhere, admittedly often to the detriment of picturesque countryside, but like nature's habit, many such developments have adapted to their surroundings to become today's attractive settlements. In 1947 despite the destruction of much existing housing during WWII, the Government of the day drew an artificial line around all existing settlements termed 'The Greenbelt'. beyond which new housing development was essentially stopped overnight. Later recommenced where the Government would decide to build a new town, overturning their own greenbelt rules. These settlements have been on the whole, characterless, undesirable places to live as has been demonstrated by successive decades of experience .

### **Misuse of the greenbelt principle**

Nevertheless, accepting the 'Greenbelt' concept in general was a worthwhile device for conserving beautiful countryside and areas of particular national interest for future generations, over the last 60 years or so, virtually every Council and planning authority in the land has seized upon this device to unduly restrict ongoing and future development. This situation today has evolved into a political liability with most local authorities fearing to grasp the nettle of future sustainable development in their localities. With Britain's burgeoning population for all the various reasons currently debated, like most initially good ideas, the greenbelt concept has now gone full circle to the detriment of the house seeking population at large. Existing communities are permitted to oppose the locations and numbers of new housing, denying future generations of aspiring home owners the same rights and benefits objectors themselves, already enjoy. This is both an injustice and a recipe for stagnation and eventual unsustainability for the future and this unhealthy trend must now be remedied by local authorities, this responsibility now having been relinquished by central Government.

The most obvious, detrimental long term effect of the artificial greenbelt restriction has been to create a post war scarcity of properties available to the constantly evolving population which would have enabled the new town concentrations of population, to be better dispersed throughout existing settlements, thus reducing the large concentrations of tasteless development and areas of rising crime.

The second detrimental long term effect of greenbelt restriction is the ridiculously high prices, (partly through land values due to scarcity), British society has come to accept as normal in the housing market, making house ownership unattainable for a large section of society. These aspiring residents may have some recourse for Government assistance via housing societies, who themselves find it almost impossible to find suitable land for their own sustainability. This has been recently demonstrated by the utter failure of the Rochford Council's very own Rochford Housing Association to find sufficient land on which to construct their housing. Once again existing greenbelt restrictions have not helped, but perhaps it can be considered that the present Core Strategy proposals will address this problem. (Please see attached press cutting).

### **The future**

To satisfy the demand for future housing in the Rochford District it is our view that the Council Core Strategy is essentially correct and on balance is the best way forward with it's general proposal to use predominantly peripheral greenbelt sites adjacent to existing settlements. However, it

is felt that the Core Strategy document as presented may have given a somewhat false impression to the general public of the actual development sites intended to be developed, by the incorporation of all the alternative options in one document. These would perhaps have been better received by the public issued as separate documents. We believe the principle was not fully understood by the objecting public that the actual proposed development will in fact be only approximately a quarter of the sites proposed in the one CS Document. The overall issue of new development in Rochford District is further exacerbated in the public mind by national builders and developers advocating alternative sites not included in the Core Strategy, even to the point of an appeal to the Government Inspectorate.

Thus the existing Core Strategy as it stands may be seen to be a suitable device to protect the greenbelt proper, whilst releasing some land and space for future expansion and sustainability.

### **An overview**

If the established, proposed housing quotas in the Rochford Core Strategy are scrapped, it would mean that the whole exercise would have to commence afresh, wasting the resources already expended at a time when Government is under severe duress to make savings and reduce expenditure. It is obvious anyway, that if some future development is to go ahead, some greenbelt land would have to be released and any new assessment of where to build would ultimately result in the same or similar locations. Without some expansion for the future, as suggested, communities wither and eventually lose their facilities, like shops, post offices and other services.

Therefore, our viewpoint of the Government's new and potential changes which could affect the Core Strategy is that with so much work having already been carried out by the Rochford Council and Planning Policy Department, that except perhaps for some minor revision of numbers, the Rochford District Core Strategy should continue to finalise the best sites from the identified options and proceed to formal adoption for the next plan period.

### **For ourselves**

Representing a private land trust informally partnered with The Swan Housing Association we have, since before the advent of the current Core Strategy, been campaigning for the release from the greenbelt of part of the land of Option site (SWH4) more clearly defined in the attached copy representation. In the Core Strategy Allocations Document our site (part of Option SWH4) has been selected by the Council as part of one of four options and is directly linked to the existing necessity to upgrade a busy sub-standard, triple main road junction and necessary drainage improvements with which we are willing to assist with, via an appropriate Section 106 Agreement. Some of the associated land in Option SWH4 is subject to periodic flooding and is situated adjoining a large built up neighbourhood which has generated a strong body of objection to any new development in this locality. However, should the Council decide to make any reduction in number or area in the final selected Option for this locality, our particular site to the south is ideally situated to accommodate these two problems and would appear to be the most practical and viable part of Option SWH4, being adjacent to the lesser of the objecting neighbourhoods.

Therefore, should the Council decide to modify future housing numbers as a result of the new Government's Planning Policy guidelines, we hope and trust our site would be retained for release from the greenbelt for the above reasons.

Finally, there have been recent press reports of Government Ministers proposing bribing objectors to accept new developments with Council Tax concessions. Objectors will object simply to obtain such financial incentives. Communal concessions already on offer with most new housing developments are set quotas of affordable housing, allocations to local people, sustainable management by a housing association, infra-structure upgrades where applicable via Section 106 Agreements and the benefits of enhanced neighbourhood sustainability for local services. To adopt the suggested technique to appease objectors would quickly evolve into communal blackmail and bring anarchy and corruption into the mix for new housing.

In further support of our views and foregoing statements we accordingly enclose herewith, a full copy of our original representations outlining the attributes of our site for the Examining Inspector's information.

Yours sincerely



**SPENCER WELSH**  
Managing Trustee