



■ Ready for the fight – residents unite to protest against plans for hundreds of homes in the village

Picture: DAVE HENDERSON LBMNAG

## Parish council is mobilising village over 850-home plan

By JOHN GEOGHEGAN  
john.geoghegan@nqe.com

A CAMPAIGN by angry villagers to stop 850 houses being built in their parish is gathering pace.

Residents and councillors in Rawreth have reacted with fury over Rochford District Council's plans to allocate land for hundreds of new homes in the eastern part of the parish.

The district council is consulting residents about its proposal to allow homes on green belt land between London Road and Rawreth Lane, to the west of

□ Residents urged to write objections to district council

□ Opponent says Rawreth 'is already gridlocked'

Rayleigh. Rawreth parish councillors are urging villagers to write letters of objection to the council and are also organising a petition.

They are busy delivering leaflets to people alerting them to the plans, and will display the plans in the village hall next month.

Alistair Matthews, chairman of Rawreth Parish Council, said: "This council has been totally flab-

bergasted by what's been going on at the district council. This development will be of no benefit to the village at all.

"We are gridlocked at the moment. "What will it be like with all these houses? We are not against housing, but do it right."

A total of 5,500 new homes must be built in the district by 2025 under the East of England Plan.

Parish councillors are angry the district council did not speak to them before launching its plans and believe the village infrastructure would not be able to cope with all the new families.

They also have concerns about

flooding and feel other brownfield sites should be built on first, rather than quality arable land.

Keith Hudson, Rochford councillor responsible for planning, also urged villagers to get involved with the consultation in a constructive way.

He said: "The parish council says it will ruin the village, but the homes are not proposed to go anywhere near the village."

"As far as we are concerned this is an expansion of Rayleigh town."

"The infrastructure is all pretty much there. You have the A130, Rawreth Lane and London Road."

"We need to provide homes for our children."

"This is not cast in stone, but are our preferred options."

"I want residents, if they don't like it, to tell us where they would prefer the housing to go."

### SEE THE PLANS

The parish council will hold its exhibition at Rawreth Village Hall, in Church Road, on Sunday, November 23, and Sunday, December 7, from 10am until 2pm. Residents have until December 17 to comment on the plans.

## 5,500 new homes plan

● A PLAN for 5,500 homes has been passed to the Government for scrutiny.

The homes must be built in Rochford by 2025 as part of Government housing targets.

Communities Secretary, John Denham, will conduct the examination process.

An inquiry will then be held by the Government's Planning Inspectorate with the date and venue to be announced.

## Public get chance to air views on housing plan

A PUBLIC hearing by a Government inspector about plans to build thousands of new homes in the Rochford district will take place in May.

The council's core strategy, which decides where 5,500 new homes will be built before 2025, has been sent to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

The homes must be built to meet Government housing targets under the East of England plan.

An examination will be held by a planning inspector on behalf of the Secretary of State to decide whether the core strategy is legally acceptable.

The hearing starts on May 11 at 10am, at Rayleigh Civic Suite, in Hockley Road, Rayleigh.

Before this, a pre-hearing meeting takes place at 2pm, on Wednesday, March 24, also at the Civic Suite, to discuss the arrangements and procedures for the public inquiries.

The council is urging anyone who wants to appear at the examination to go to the pre-hearing meeting.

For more information, e-mail programme officer, Lissa Higby at [programme.officer@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:programme.officer@rochford.gov.uk) or call 01702 546366.

## A day of information on district's services

AN information day on everything from health to volunteering and consumer issues is being held in Hullbridge.

People are invited to come along to the Hullbridge Centre, Windermere Avenue, on April 7, between 10am and 1pm.

The event, organised by the partners of Rochford district's local strategic partnership, is primarily targeted at those over 50, to raise awareness of local services available to them.

Groups involved in the event include Rochford District Council, Essex County Council, NHS South East Essex, Essex Police and a

variety of voluntary organisations.

Leader of Rochford District Council, Terry Cutmore, said: "This first information day is a great idea.

"It provides the partnership the opportunity to meet residents face-to-face in a fun way, but, more importantly, tell them about the services available, and how we can all help and support those in need.

"There is so much available, I'm sure a lot of people will be surprised to hear about how much we all offer."

Although the event is aimed at older people, everyone is welcome.

## Plans for district

**HOCKLEY:** There will be a meeting to discuss the Rochford District Council core strategy, and the location for hundreds of new homes in the district. Hockley Residents' Association will be holding a joint meeting with Hockley Parish Council in Greensward Academy, Greensward Lane, on Tuesday, April 13, at 7.30pm.





■ Flood risk – Watery Lane often has to be closed after heavy rain. This photo was taken in March

# 'We don't want new homes in our village'

By EMMA THOMAS  
emma.thomas@nqe.com

MORE than 200 concerned villagers attended a packed meeting to discuss plans for new housing in Hullbridge.

The angry audience voiced concerns about plans to build 500 homes on green belt land near Watery Lane.

Under Government plans, 250 homes must be built in Hullbridge by 2021 and another 250 after 2021, although the Tories say they will scrap these targets if they win the general election.

At a local meeting at the Hullbridge Centre in Windemere Avenue, families expressed fears the village, which has a population of 6,500, could not support the extra people.

Kerry Taylor, 43, from the Hullbridge Action Group, said he was concerned the area identified was at risk of flooding.

He told members of Rochford District Council at the meeting: "You have identified land that is below sea level. A hell of a lot of money has to be spent to make that possible.

"People's fears are there are consequences for building on an unofficial flood plain.

"There is a moral responsibility to the 500 families who may be living on that land. They need someone to be accountable."

Fellow action group member Beverley Blakesley, 42, said:

□ 200 pack hall to voice their protests  
□ They fear services will be overloaded

"The primary schools and GPs around this area are at capacity. There has to be clarity as to how you are going to provide the infrastructure."

Speaking about the flood issue, Sean Scrutton, head of planning, said the Environment Agency did not class the land as in a flood plain. However Watery Lane has regularly flooded, most recently during heavy rainfall last month, when five motorists were stranded and had to be rescued by boat.

But Mr Scrutton said: "In the future, all drainage systems related to new houses will have to be approved and adopted by Essex County Council. Yes, there will be an accountable body."

Keith Hudson, Tory councillor responsible for planning, and council leader Terry Cutmore also faced hostile crowds at the two-hour meeting which was frequently interrupted by shouting.

A presentation was given by the Hullbridge Action Group and a petition was passed around for residents to sign during the meeting.

All three of the councillors present urged residents to give their views during the consultation by post and e-mail, by the deadline of April 30.



■ Angry – the hall was packed with villagers concerned about flooding and services



# Residents get emotional over pitches plan for travellers

- ❑ More than 200 people turn up to discuss proposals
- ❑ Council earmarks two sites in Hockley

By EMMA THOMAS  
emma.thomas@nqe.com

EMOTIONS were running high at a public meeting to discuss travellers' sites in Hockley.

More than 200 people turned up to a meeting at Greensward Academy, to talk about Rochford District Council's plans for the sites.

The council has to provide 18 travellers pitches across the district. Two sites in Hockley – Plumberow Avenue and New Park Road – were put forward as being suitable.

Keith Hudson, councillor responsible for planning said: "The council removed two illegal sites last year, one in Plumberow Avenue and one in Trenderers Avenue.

"Common sense has to come into it somewhere. Travellers do a lot of travelling. If they choose to be in our area, they need to be in a location that is accessible to the main hub of the highways. I don't think you could say Hockley is in the main hub."

One Hockley resident said



■ Have your say – residents packed out the meeting at Greensward Academy

at the meeting: "The councillor made reference to Plumberow Avenue. It seems ridiculous to me the council spent time and money to get travellers off that site, and now it's being considered as a travellers' site. It seems to me it is a case of the right and left hand not knowing what they are doing.

"On one hand you talk about options, and on the other you say it has come down from above and it is mandatory."

The resident also asked what was meant by a "pitch".

Planning policy team leader, Sam Hollingsworth, replied one pitch meant two caravans.

He added: "It is normally one pitch per family.

"The Plumberow site was

formally submitted to us and asked to be considered. We can't simply ignore it because of the past history."

All representatives from the council urged members of the audience to write in with their comments and suggestions.

The deadline for feedback on the consultation is April 30.

For more information, to view options for both documents and to submit your comments, go to [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)

Paper copies of the documents are also available to view at Rochford Council Offices, Rayleigh Civic Suite, and in all libraries within the district. Alternatively, residents can contact planning policy on 01702 318191.

## Future plan for homes

● RESIDENTS are being urged to speak out on a blueprint for future developments.

Until April 30, Rochford District Council wants people's views on a plan to identify specific sites for development.

The council has prepared documents that explain where houses and factories will be built in the green belt.

For more information, visit [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)

## Village protest at house plans

MORE than 500 villagers turned out for a meeting to protest against hundreds of new homes in Hullbridge.

The event was arranged by the Hullbridge Action Group to help residents write letters of objection against Rochford District Council's plans to build 500 homes on land next to Watery Lane in Hullbridge.

Under Government plans, 250 homes must be built in Hullbridge by 2021 and

another 250 after 2021, although the Tories say they will scrap these targets if they win the general election.

At an earlier public meeting, families spoke of their fears that the new homes would add extra pressure to the infrastructure of the village.

The group will deliver the letters to Rochford District Council on Thursday morning at the offices at 3-19 South Street, Rochford, at 10.45am.





■ Delivered – Hullbridge action group members hand in letters of protest

Picture: STEVE O'CONNELL 4MHV6-03

# We don't want more homes in village

By EMMA THOMAS  
emma.thomas@nqe.com

HUNDREDS of protest letters against plans for new housing on green belt land have been handed in to a council.

The Hullbridge Action Group is against plans to build 500 homes in the village, including near Watery Lane, which regularly floods.

The group has said roads, schools and doctors surgeries would not support the extra pressure new houses would put on the area.

Yesterday, 400 letters of objection to the plans were

□ Concern services will not cope  
□ Objections must be in by April 30

handed over to Rochford District Council.

Under Government policy, 250 homes must be built in Hullbridge by 2021 and another 250 after 2021.

Jacqui Taylor, from the Hullbridge Action Group, said: "We handed 400 letters in and we still want more. We had 1,300 signatures on the petition and about 12 residents turned up."

At a public meeting earlier this month, more than 200 villagers turned out to question councillors about the scheme.

The group has set up a Facebook site and they also plan to deliver leaflets to homes across the village over the weekend.

They have also produced posters for residents to stick in their window to show their objection.

The deadline for written objections is April 30 and the group is encouraging people to continue to write letters against the plans until the deadline.

Rochford District

Council's head of planning, Shaun Scrutton, said: "The allocations development plan discussion and consultation document is at an early stage of preparation. Nothing is set in stone and we very much welcome the views and opinions of our residents, which will all be very carefully considered."

"Anyone wishing to comment can do so until April 30 online at [rochford.gov.uk](http://rochford.gov.uk).

"Paper copies are available to view in Rochford Council Offices, Rayleigh Civic Suite, and in libraries. Alternatively, contact planning policy on 01702 318191."

# HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN

**RESIDENTS** in the Rochford District Council area are being reminded they can still have their say on two key documents that will help shape how the area develops in the future.

Rochford District Council wants to hear your views on the Allocations Development Plan Document and the Development Management Development Plan Document by April 30.

The council says it is important residents have their say on these documents as they will build on the approach set out in the developing Rochford Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy will set out the vision, objectives and overall strategy for the future development of the District.

The Allocations Development Plan Document will identify specific sites for development or for protection. The council has prepared a

## PUBLIC INQUIRY

A public inquiry was opened in Rayleigh into a plan by developers, Colonnade who want to build homes on land at Coombes Farm, off Stambridge Rocheway and Mill Lane, between Stambridge and Rayleigh.

Rochford District Council refused the company's application - who then appealed and a public inquiry was ordered.

## Report by JOHN BLACK

consultation document that explains and reviews a range of options, but we need your views on these.

For example, the document will determine specific sites within existing green belt where land will be reallocated for housing or employment uses.

In addition, the document will set out important environmental allocations, such as local wildlife sites, and land to be designated for uses such as leisure or education.

The Development Management Development Plan Document sets out a range of policies intended to influence the form and character of new development in the District. It also sets out policies for specific issues not addressed by other planning documents, including domestic extensions, conversion of rural buildings, and non-retail uses in town centres.

## TRAVELLERS PROTEST

**MORE** than 200 residents attended a meeting in Hockley to protest about plans for two sites to be set aside in the area for visiting travellers.

Rochford District Council have to provide 18 travellers' pitches across the district and two of these could be in Plumberow Avenue and New Park Road.

Residents have until April 30 to register their views to the council.



# 700 villagers sign up to oppose house plan

By EMMA THOMAS

emma.thomas@nqe.com

MORE than a quarter of the people in a village have joined a campaign against plans to build new homes on green belt land.

The Hullbridge Action Group has been sent 700 letters of objection from residents concerned about plans to build 500 homes in the village, near Watery Lane.

The group has said roads, schools and doctors surgeries would not support the extra pressure the new houses would put on the area.

There are 2,560 people in Hullbridge, so more than a quarter of the population have joined the campaign.

The group delivered leaflets and posters door to door, held meetings and started a Facebook group to inform residents of the plans.

Jacqui Taylor, from the group, said the protest was mounting quickly.

She said: "The council will take notice of us."

"Everyone objected to

□ Scheme seeking to build 500 homes in Hullbridge

□ Residents fear it will clog up roads

these plans and we are just trying to get them to listen to us really.

"We weren't told what was happening before. No one was aware of it."

"That is what upset the majority of residents – being in the dark."

At a public meeting last month, more than 200 villagers turned out to question councillors about the scheme.

Mrs Taylor added: "We did a poster that said 'Stop building on Hullbridge green belt'."

"When we walk round the village, quite a lot of people have got their posters up as well."

The deadline for written responses was April 30 and the document is due to go in front of a planning inquiry on May 11.

# NEW HOMES PROPOSAL

By EMMA THOMAS  
emma.thomas@nqe.com

● Infrastructure couldn't cope, say objectors ● Villagers want their communities to stay small

"WE cannot cope" – that was the message families across the Rochford district battling to stop thousands of new homes being built in their towns and villages have sent to officials.

They were speaking on the second day of a planning inquiry into Rochford District Council's core strategy document, which sets out where 5,500 new homes should be built in the coming years.

Representatives from residents' groups and landowners attended the hearing to describe the document's proposals as "unsustainable".

Kerry Taylor, of the Hullbridge Action Group, said: "We are opposing the building on green belt land and the unsustainable number of houses which is being suggested – not just in Hullbridge."

Hullbridge Action Group, Hawkwell and Hockley's residents' associations, Rawreth and Hawkwell parish councils, West Rochford Action Group and the Hockley Parish Plan Group all spoke out about the proposals.

Lib Dem district councillor Chris Black, Independent councillor John Mason and newly-elected Green Party councillor Michael Hoy also attended, representing Downhall and Rawreth, Hawkwell West and Hullbridge wards.

Mr Mason raised his electors' concerns about extra traffic in Hawkwell West ward if the proposed 175 homes were built before 2015.

He said the council's policy

■ Opposition – objectors who are fighting the core strategy proposals at the inquiry

stated new development should aim to encourage fewer car journeys by residents, by building closer to workplaces and shops.

He added: "Speaking about south Hawkwell in particular, I am not sure those locations actually fulfil the requirements."

Traffic and infrastructure were also issues for the Hawkwell Action Group's 300 members, said its representative, Carol Dutton.

She said: "In Hawkwell, residents think the infrastructure needs have been grossly underestimated. They feel it difficult

to justify a housing estate in Hawkwell. It is a small, semi-rural area and we find it totally inappropriate."

The district has been told to find sites for the homes by 2025 under the former Labour government's housing policy. However it is not clear yet if

the new Conservative Lib Dem coalition will keep the plans.

The hearings are expected to continue until Friday, May 21.



Picture: STEVE O'CONNELL BA30809\_003

## Specific sites will be revealed in a second 'allocations' plan

THE sites where thousands of houses could be built have still to be finalised.

Details of the specific sites will be in the Allocations Development Plan Document – a separate document, which has yet to be agreed.

Several potential sites have proved very controversial, with more than 700 people writing to oppose one of the council's proposals, for 500 homes in Hullbridge, near Watery Lane.

More than a quarter of Hullbridge's 2,560 villagers have joined the campaign led by the Hullbridge Action

Group. The core strategy document also sets out plans for where the 18 travellers pitches the council has been told to provide could go.

Plans for traveller sites in Plumberow Avenue and New Park Road, Hockley, caused an outcry when they were revealed at a public meeting.

Between now and October, the council will collate the response from the public.

The revised core strategy document will then go through another round of public consultation before a final version is agreed.

## Threat to industrial estates

PROPOSALS to flatten two industrial estates to make way for houses came under attack at the inquiry.

One option in the strategy would use the sites of Hockley's Eldon Way and the Foundry Industrial estates for housing.

Tim Gleadall, representing residents from Hockley and Hawkwell, raised concerns about the plans at the inquiry. He said: "A residents' survey was carried out

and only one person in eight wanted redevelopment in Eldon Way and only one per cent wanted residential. This is going totally against what the residents want.

"We haven't got the infrastructure for 150 houses, or 200 more cars using Spa Road which is already gridlocked in rush hour. People want Hockley to remain a village."

The industrial estates were singled out because they are close to the railway line.

### WHERE HOMES ARE PLANNED FOR

LAND	Houses by 2015	Houses between 2015 & 2021
North of London Road, Rayleigh	550	0
West Rochford	450	150
West Hockley	50	0
South Hawkwell	175	0
East Ashingdon	100	0
South west Hullbridge	0	250
South Canewdon	0	50
TOTAL	775	1010



# Homes protest expected

SCORES of campaigners are expected to voice their opposition today over plans for hundreds of new homes in Hawkwell, Hockley, Rochford and Rawreth.

A planning inquiry started yesterday into Rochford District Council's core strategy, which will state where 5,500 new homes will be built by 2025.

The document has been sent to the secretary of state for independent examination, who will determine whether it is legally acceptable.

The detailed location and amount of houses is contained in the allocations development plan document – a separate document which has not yet been agreed.

At the hearing today, residents are expected to put forward their views on where the houses should go.

So many people are expected to attend the hearing, it had to be moved into a bigger room at the district council offices in Hockley Road, Rayleigh.

# '3,000 green belt homes'

By DAVID TRAYNER  
david.trayner@nqe.com

ABOUT 3,000 homes will have to be built on green belt to provide for coming generations, council chiefs predict.

Bosses at Rochford District Council believe brownfield sites can only provide a quarter of the 4,000 properties they estimate will be needed by 2027 – meaning the remainder will have to be built in the countryside.

The stark estimate comes after the Echo called for a debate – called Southend 2030 – on whether green belt should be sacrificed to build the family homes, new roads and schools which are so in demand.

Keith Hudson, Rochford Tory councillor responsible for planning, said: "It's frustrating.

"On the one hand, I'm aware we have to provide for our children and our children's children. I want to say we will provide new homes.

"On the other hand, I have huge sympathy for those directly affected by new development on their doorstep."

Last week, the Echo sparked a discussion about how to cope with the burgeoning population in Southend, Rochford District and Castle Point.

Developers claimed the Government's axing of national housing targets gave residents the



freedom to decide where, when and how many new homes were built. It has also cleared the way for council chiefs to move green belt boundaries to allow towns and villages to expand.

But council chiefs said the number of new homes which were built was largely out of their control.

Shaun Scrutton, the council's head of planning and transportation, said: "What residents don't understand is the Government says local authorities should significantly boost the supply of housing.

"That's what the Government says in writing. If local authorities don't carry out the relevant studies, identify the need and plan to meet that need, then when planning applications come forward the expectation is they will be approved."

**HAVE YOUR SAY**  
E-mail [echo.letters@nqe.com](mailto:echo.letters@nqe.com)



■ Earmarked – the entrance to the Michelins Farm site, off the old A130  
Picture: MAXINE CLARKE  
BA71651\_007



# Council plan for traveller site by Fairglen junction

**EXCLUSIVE**

By EMMA THOMAS  
emma.thomas@nqe.com

ROCHFORD Council is to build an official traveller site, so it can clear away illegal pitches from the district.

The council has confirmed plans for a 15-pitch site at Michelins Farm, off the A130, in Rawreth, close to the A127 Fairglen

■ Keith Hudson – sites



## 15 pitches plus an industrial estate on land off the old A130

Interchange. The council says the site, which is bordered by the A127, the A1245 (the old A130), the A130 and the Southend-Liverpool Street railway line, is a more suitable location for travellers now living on several unauthorised sites in the district.

The East of England Regional Assembly has told Rochford it must provide 15 pitches by 2018.

Keith Hudson, Tory councillor responsible for planning, said the council

would retain ownership and control of the site.

As well as the traveller pitches, it would include a small industrial estate.

Mr Hudson suggested such a site would allow the council to clear all the district's unauthorised pitches.

He added: "We have a number of sites in our green belt which are occupied by the travelling community without planning permission."

"They have appealed to the Secretary of State and their

appeals have been lost.

"The council has identified a site which fulfils the Government requirement.

"We have taken it head-on and dealt with it in an appropriate way, not ducking our responsibilities."

The news was welcomed by Alistair Matthews, vice chairman of Rawreth Parish Council, who owns farmland near to an unauthorised site off Chelmsford Road, Rawreth.

He said by providing an official site for the district's travellers, it would make it easier to clear illegal sites.

He added: "I am fully in support of it. As a parish council, we put forward this site as a preferred area for industry. We would welcome the site 100 per cent, provided the residents have full facilities and everything they need."

"Michelin's Farm is green belt but it has been used as a dump for many years. We have encouraged the council to take the land over."

“We have taken it head-on and dealt with it in an appropriate way, not ducking our responsibilities

## Basildon is also looking for suitable areas

BASILDON Council is looking at locations where it could create official traveller sites.

However, council leader Tony Ball has said nothing will be made public until early next year.

He said: "We are working on a development plan document

and are procuring people to do it.

"It has to be an independent report."

"The information which is gathered will feed into the local development framework for the whole borough and should be ready at the same

time as we come out with our preferred options."

Under regional planning targets, the council was told it needed to find as many as 62 authorised caravan pitches.

Mr Ball said he was unable to say how many would be developed at this stage.

He added: "Like with other housing, we will be looking at demographic growth, but at the moment I honestly don't know."

A spokesman for Southend Council confirmed it presently had no official traveller pitches and no plans to build any.



# COUNCIL IN FINAL STAGES OF PLANNING DOCUMENTS

**ROCHFORD District Council is progressing the final stages of two important planning documents that will have an impact on the way the District looks in the future.**

The Allocations Document is a key planning document, forming part of a collection of documents known as the Local Development Framework. This document allocates land for a range of uses that will have an affect on day-to-day life in the District, including housing, employment, open space, town centres and environmental designations.

The final stage of this document - the 'Allocations Submission Document' - sets out the council's preferred approach to the location of new housing and employment.

As well as this, there is a final version of the Hockley Area Action Plan (HAAP).

The HAAP sets out the vision for the future development of Hockley centre, identifying areas for regeneration and improvement. Some areas of land within the HAAP allocate land for a range of uses including housing, employment and public open space.

The plan also sets out a vision for improvements to the public realm, including junction and highways improvements, the creation of public open spaces, com-

## Report by JOHN BLACK

munity facilities and the development of leisure uses.

Both the Allocations Document and the HAAP are now available to view with a formal consultation asking if residents agree with the proposed final plans.

Representations can be made until 5pm on January 25. Only representations made during this time will be considered, late responses will not be accepted.

Residents can view the consultation online at [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)

They can also view hard copies of the documents in the council offices and in their local library. If residents have any problems accessing the documents they can ring 01702 318191.



## Residents demand a rethink on plan to designate site for homes



■ Not here – Shirley Maslanka, Sally Simmons, Sharon Hook, Chris Rooke, Cara Ayers, Raoul Chittenden and Julie Foster are furious over plans the church has to sell off land around the Grade II listed church, inset, so developers can build 60 new homes Pictures: AL UNDERWOOD BA74943\_08,03

# 'No new houses on land by old church'

VILLAGERS are furious over plans to build 60 homes near a historic church.

People living in Canewdon say the new homes will ruin the look of the village and the view around the Grade II\* listed St Nicholas Church, built in the 14th century.

Rochford District Council has selected the site nearby as its preferred option for new homes after a lengthy consultation.

This site, owned by the Diocese of Chelmsford, has been named by the council in a planning document which sets out where thousands of homes will be built in the district.

A Government planning inspector will review the document later this year and decide if it is suitable.

Julie Foster, who lives near the proposed site, says she knew the area had been suggested as a place for housing 18 months ago but thought another area, off Scotts Hall Road, would be chosen instead.

She said: "I live next door to the site. My view will be a lot of houses, not the church. I'm gutted."

By EMMA THOMAS  
emma.thomas@nqe.com

"We have been here eight years and we never thought they would build on there. It just seems crazy."

Mrs Foster said she wasn't against new development in the area, but she didn't think this was the right place.

She added: "We accept there has to be houses in Canewdon, but there has to be better sites. Why isn't the council listening to anyone?"

Another neighbour, Sharon Hook, added: "We are not pushing any particular bit of land. There are a lot of locations the council is ignoring."

"The church draws people to the village, we have ramblers come from all over just to walk there. It is something people feel passionate about."

However, the council insists it had consulted with local people.

Keith Hudson, Tory councillor responsible for planning, said: "There are houses very near to the church. This development is nowhere near the church, compared to the existing houses."

### FACTFILE ON CANEWDON

- The 14th-century parish church of St Nicholas on the village High Street stands on a ridge overlooking the River Crouch. Its impressive 15th-century tower, a landmark for many miles, is said to have been built by Henry V after his victory at the Battle of Agincourt in France.
- During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the tower was used as a navigation point along the River Crouch. During the First World War, it was used for observation and signalling.

- There is much superstition surrounding the village.
- George Pickingill (1816-1909) who lived in the village during the late 19th century, was said to practice a combination of Danish paganism, Arabic mysticism, Christian heresy and French witchcraft. He apparently called witches for a meet near St Nicholas church with a wooden whistle.
- Local legend says there will always be at least six witches in the village.

"From previous consultations, the site there was by far the preferred one. There was great concern about building south of the road because if you start there, where does it stop? The road is a buffer."

A spokesman for Chelmsford Diocese said: "Chelmsford Diocesan Board of Finance is entering into an option with Essex-based housebuilders Knights that gives them the obli-

gation to promote the planning of, and on obtaining a consent the right to buy, one of three sites in Canewdon.

"This would be a sensitive development that would not affect views. It would include green space."

People are invited to have their say on the plans until Friday, January 25.

For more information, go to [www.rochford.gov.uk](http://www.rochford.gov.uk)