

20th April 2011

Our ref RP/010036/Higby 20-4

Lissa Higby
Programme Officer
Rochford District Council
South Street
Rochford
Essex
SS4 1BW

Dear Ms Higby

Rochford Core Strategy Examination: Supplementary comments from Capita Symonds on behalf of AW Squier Ltd, The Croll Group, Humphrey Squier, Daniel Squier and Jeremy Squier in response to "Planning for Growth" issued by The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP Minister of State

I refer to the distribution of this Ministerial Statement by Rochford District Council, on behalf of the Inspector and her invitation to submit comment.

There can be no doubt that the Government is committed to sharply growing the economy as soon as possible and the ministerial statement sets out the part that the planning system should play in meeting that challenge. With respect to the Rochford Core Strategy, local authorities are advised by Government to "support enterprise and facilitate housing, economic and other forms of sustainable development". In doing this, Councils are, amongst other objectives, required to take account of the need to "maintain a flexible and responsive supply of land for key sectors, including housing".

Given this recent advice, the suggested changes to the Core Strategy can no longer be supported. The changes proposed by the Council, replaced minimum housing growth numbers, set out in the Submitted Core Strategy with maximums, thereby limiting the supply of housing over the plan period. Such an approach can not be considered flexible or responsive to the growth of housing in the district.

The Submitted Core Strategy proposes housing allocations on existing employment sites and the creation of new employment sites in the Green Belt. Our clients have always been sceptical as to the likely success of this approach, as there will be substantial commercial difficulties in assembling the land and significant logistical difficulties in translocating businesses from one site to another. Employers who have been displaced by the housing allocation may choose to move away from Rochford altogether. Concerns have been expressed by many at the Examination and in representations with regard to the deliverability of these sites and the possible job losses to the district, which may result. Risking jobs in this way could not be said to be conducive to promoting strong economic growth. The housing allocations earmarked for the employment sites could in part be redirected to other equally sustainable locations.

Our clients land at East Ashingdon was identified by the previous Local Plan Inspector, as being sustainably located and capable of development without significant harm to the countryside. Development of this land for 100 units as identified in the Core Strategy would also solve some longstanding local difficulties in accessing and making provision for growth at The King Edmund Secondary School adjacent.

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Croxton's Mill, Little Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 3PJ
Tel +44 (0)1245 361611 Fax +44 (0)1245 362423 www.capitasymonds.co.uk/townplanning
Capita Symonds Ltd incorporating Andrew Martin Associates

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The broad location of this land and the planning application to follow it offers precisely the type of proposal that should be approved without delay, it is the type of proposal that Ministers are thinking of when reference is made to the Government's Statement that the default answer to such proposals should wherever possible be 'Yes'.

I trust these comments are of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Robert Pomery BA(Hons) Dip TP MRTPI
Consultant