

Subject: Maldon Development Plan Legal Compliance.

Comments on the letter from Andrew Martin Planning dated 16th March 2015, and the Inspector's response dated 17th March 2015.

Following are my comments on the above letters. I am restricting them solely to the level of public consultation on this whole process, as the referenced letters indicate this is a key point in the debate at this stage. I am also limiting my comments to the Heybridge North development.

1. I feel public consultation on the MDP has effectively taken the form of little more than a 'tick the box' process. At the early 'show and tell' events, no details of the proposed Heybridge relief road route or junctions were available. ("That's Essex County Council and they haven't done their bit yet", said the advisors from MDC) No details of traffic management plans for the predictably greatly increased number of vehicle movements were available (same comment from MDC). The initial phase for Heybridge was for under 1000 homes I believe.
2. When the revised plan was launched, the number of homes on the Heybridge development had increased by around 37%, and these had apparently been placed on a previously identified flood mitigation area ("also required for flood mitigation in line with Maldon and Heybridge surface water management plan"). Coincidentally the area happened to have been flooded at that stage in the consultation process, with a resident population of swans. As far as I recall we were not invited to comment on those trivial details! Instead we were told to limit our comments to 'soundness and legality' of the plan, using a very detailed, prescriptive process, which personally I found incomprehensible. Still no details of road routing or traffic management plans were available, and comments on the above omissions were, in my view, incapable of being fitted into the prescribed format. However in my response I included written explanations of my concerns.
3. In a letter dated 28th February 2014, MDC offered to rewrite my comments in the approved format. I accepted this offer, (although I could not see how it could possibly be achieved). I did ask for a copy of MDC's re-write of my input, but unfortunately did not receive one.
4. Although I have read of several individual planning applications in the local press, and picked up other possible sites 'through the grapevine', I have never been advised by MDC of these. How these may or may not relate to the Maldon Development Plan, and the rationale used to include or exclude them, is not available to me. I would make the point however, that in any normal business, a management team makes a major decision only after fully evaluating all the alternatives, and planning/costing the solution to any problems identified.

I still hold the view that such a public consultation on the soundness and legality of a major plan incomplete in key major aspects, and with new late changes, was not valid. I would not order a motor car from a company that said "we haven't designed the steering or brakes yet, or compared it with competitors, but sign-up now"!

Michael Brand.
March 23rd, 2015