

## **MATTER 3: NORTH HEYBRIDGE GARDEN SUBURB**

### **DELIVERY OF THE COUNTRY PARK**

The Council is aware that the use of the terminology 'Country Park' under Policy S4 may have given rise to some misinterpretation and wishes to provide further clarification.

At the outset, it is important to understand what was intended by the proposed creation of a 'Country Park' within the boundary of the North Heybridge Garden Suburb. There is no standard definition of a Country Park and Country Parks vary significantly from place to place in terms of their size, functions and facilities. However, they have one common purpose: to provide easy access to the countryside for those living in the towns and suburbs and it is this function which the Council is seeking to promote. It is not the Council's intention to establish a formal Country Park in this location but rather to maintain a green buffer between Langford and Heybridge and to take the opportunity presented in the Local Development Plan to provide access to the countryside and to create a well-connected network of green spaces, including linkages to Elms Farm Park and the Blackwater Rail Trail. This is consistent with the NPPF (para 114) which states that local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure

Through Policy S4, the Council is seeking *inter alia* to ensure that the land between Maypole Road and the relief road is protected in order to:

- provide a clear separation between the Villages of Langford and Heybridge;
- provide an attractive setting for approaching Heybridge and Maldon which is befitting of a garden suburb and in keeping with the rural character of the surrounding area;
- protect and enhance the setting of Listed Buildings including the Old Rectory, the stables associated with the Old Rectory and Mitchell Farm Barn and other heritage assets such as the former Maldon East Railway Line (now known as the Blackwater Rail Trail);
- provide improved traffic free, attractive access routes into the wider public footpath network and links to other areas of public open space;
- improve habitat connectivity to allow wildlife to disperse throughout the local landscape and the Garden Suburb.

This is in part achieved through the following wording of Policy S4 which states: 'Land between Maypole Road, Langford Road and the proposed Relief Road is identified in Policy S4 for green infrastructure, flood alleviation and landscaping'. However, the Council felt it necessary to provide some further policy direction regarding the proposed functions of this area and for this reason, included reference to 'a Country Park focused to the west of Langford Road' in the list of key infrastructure requirements to be incorporated in the North Heybridge Garden Suburb.

It is recognised by the Council that these objectives can be effectively met without the requirement for the formal designation of a Country Park. Instead, the Council will work with relevant landowners and developers and other stakeholders such as the Essex Wildlife Trust to create suitable access routes into the wider public footpath network and links to other areas of public open space and to improve habitat connectivity in the area to the west of Maypole Road. These opportunities will be further explored through the North Heybridge Garden Suburb Implementation Steering Group and Community Liaison Group. Any associated costs will be funded through CIL payments and will not be dependent on planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The Council would therefore propose the following Further Modification to Policy S4:

### **Policy S4 Maldon and North Heybridge Strategic Growth**

Delete: 'A Country Park focused to the west of Maypole Road' from the list of key infrastructure elements to be incorporated in the North Heybridge Garden Suburb;

Amend text as follows:

The following masterplanning principles should form the basis of the masterplan for the North Heybridge Garden Suburb or any proposed developments within the masterplan area in order to maintain a clear defensible northern and western boundary to Heybridge and reduce the potential for future coalescence with neighbouring villages:

- The new relief road should form a the northern boundary of the development. Only strategic flood alleviation measures and landscaping measures may be allowed to the north of the new relief road;
- Strategic flood alleviation measures may be permitted outside of the masterplan area where appropriate and required; and
- The area between the new relief road, Maypole Road and Langford Road will be used for green infrastructure, agriculture, flood alleviation and / or landscaping measures. The Council will work with landowners to create suitable access routes into the wider public footpath network and links to adjoining areas of public open space

#### **2.58 Green Infrastructure and Community Facilities**

With consideration given to the Maldon District Green Infrastructure Study (or subsequent document), the strategic growth in Maldon and Heybridge will include on-site sports, recreational and community facilities provision. In addition, these areas will include provision that enhances and creates green corridors and spaces that link with the existing urban area, the Maldon and Heybridge Central Area including Maldon Town Centre, and the wider countryside. ~~Strategic growth at Heybridge will also present an opportunity to provide a new Country Park for the District, and link to nearby existing open spaces and assets.~~

2.59 ~~Focusing a country park to the west of Maypole Road~~ Strategic growth at Heybridge will provide opportunities for enhanced access to the countryside and a well-connected network of green spaces and better linkages with the existing green infrastructure network, for example Elms Farm Park and the Blackwater Rail Trail.

2.60 A significant amount of landscape buffering shall be required on the entire length of both sides of the proposed relief road to provide a clear, defensible boundary which will help to shape the extent of the North Heybridge Garden Suburbs. The area between the new relief road, Maypole Road and Langford Road will serve as a green buffer to provide a clear separation between Heybridge and Langford Villages and to protect and enhance the setting of Listed Buildings and other heritage assets.