

*Examination of the  
Maldon District Local Plan*

**Matter 7: Rural Housing  
(including North Fambridge) and  
Settlement Boundaries**

January 2014

# Matter 7: Rural Housing (Including North Fambridge) and Settlement Boundaries

*Issue 1: Whether policies S2 and S7 with their associated text dealing with housing in rural areas is justified by the evidence, consistent with national policy, and effective*

## *North Fambridge – Settlement Hierarchy*

- 1.1 The Council’s settlement hierarchy as set out in Policy S8 is not justified in respect to North Fambridge and fails to ignore critical evidence. North Fambridge should instead be identified as a larger village.
- 1.2 North Fambridge was identified as a larger village in the settlement hierarchy in the ‘*Local Development Plan - Preferred Options Consultation*’ (2012). This document defined larger villages as:

*Defined smaller settlements with a limited range of services and opportunities for employment, retail and education. They serve a limited local catchment and contain a lower level of access to public transport.*

- 1.3 By contrast, smaller villages were defined as:

*Defined settlements containing few or no services and facilities, with limited or no access to public transport, very limited or no employment opportunities.*

- 1.4 North Fambridge was in effect recognised as a larger village as it had excellent access to train services and considerable potential to grow and develop new village services and facilities.



- 1.5 The *'Maldon District Draft Local Development Plan 2014-2029 Consultation Document'* (2013) did not propose any changes to these definitions, however North Fambridge was downgraded to a smaller village. The Council have not produced any evidence to justify this classification change. Yet North Fambridge has continued to be promoted for additional growth and is recognised in Paragraph 2.83 as a sustainable village given its proximity to higher level services.
- 1.6 It is important to note that on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014 the Council approved (subject to S106) an application (Ref: 14/01016/OUT) for 75 dwellings and a new village centre comprising 1,000 sq m of flexible commercial and community space within use classes A1, A2, A3, B1, D1, and D2. The planning application submission estimated that this development could generate up to 100 full time equivalent jobs. This approved new village centre will create a new village heart and will greatly improve its sustainability to the benefit of the wider area. Importantly this planning approval will deliver the services and facilities that will justify the inclusion of North Fambridge within the larger village category.
- 1.7 North Fambridge should be classed as a 'larger village' to take account of the approved new 1,000 sq m village centre and the identification of the village for further housing growth.

### ***North Fambridge – Development Capacity***

- 1.8 Policy S7 only identifies North Fambridge for 75 dwellings, however this figure has not been justified and does not reflect the potential full capacity of the village.
- 1.9 The *'Maldon District Local Development Plan Preferred Growth Strategy Evidence Base Supporting Paper'* (June 2012), assessed the potential for between 100 to 150 dwellings at North Fambridge. This document, using the evidence from the *'Maldon District Infrastructure Delivery Plan'* (2012), stated that there are only two development constraints in North Fambridge, namely sewerage and primary school places. Based on primary school capacity, it was stated that 125 dwellings could be accommodated in the village.



- 1.10 In light of this evidence the *'Local Development Plan - Preferred Options Consultation'* (2012) identified North Fambridge for strategic growth comprising 300 dwellings. However, without providing any justification, the Council revised this growth downwards to 75 dwellings in the *'Maldon District Draft Local Development Plan 2014-2029 Consultation Document'* (2013).
- 1.11 The Council has provided a confused approach and has failed to justify why the originally proposed 300 dwellings could not be accommodated in North Fambridge. The latest evidence, as explained below, suggests that this village could in fact accommodate this level of growth and significantly higher numbers.

#### Primary School Capacity

- 1.12 Since the publication of the Council's infrastructure evidence in 2012, Essex County Council has published *'Commissioning School Places in Essex 2013 – 2018'* (2014). Appendix 1a, Table 2 sets out the primary pupil place forecast summary for the period up until 2017/18. This table indicates that there would be a surplus of 133 pupil places in Maldon Primary Forecast Planning Group 04 area, in which North Fambridge is located. Based on the *'Essex County Council Education Contribution Guidelines Supplement'* (2011), this primary school capacity surplus could be translated to a potential ability to absorb 433 houses within this Planning Group 04 area. This does not include potential for an increased number of 1-bed properties or older person housing.
- 1.13 Growth in North Fambridge appears to have only been restricted by primary school capacity, however this latest evidence clearly demonstrates a significant capacity for significant housing growth in Planning Group 04. Given that only North Fambridge has been identified for strategic growth in this area, this potentially allows for significantly greater growth than the 75 dwellings identified in Policy S7.
- 1.14 Importantly, based on this available evidence, the originally proposed 300 dwellings could in fact be accommodated in North Fambridge based on the available primary school capacity in the area.



### Highways

- 1.15 In question 5 of Matter 7, Issue 1 the Planning Inspector has asked whether there is sufficient highway capacity to absorb a 75 dwelling allocation in North Fambridge. This issue is discussed below.
- 1.16 The Transport Statement submitted with the windfall planning permission for 75 dwellings and 1,000 sq m village centre (Ref: 14/01016/OUT) found that:
- Traffic flows on Fambridge Road are light and the road can easily accommodate additional traffic and that there is significant capacity for much larger future developments in the village.
  - 19% of existing residents use the train as the main mode of travel to work and this would be reflected in any new developments in the village.
  - A recent permission for Turncole wind farm near Burnham will mean that the double bends on the B1012 road will be widened to accommodate the large machinery that will be transported to the wind farm and so the geometry and width of the bends will be improved as part of that permission.
- 1.17 Essex County Council did not object to this approved planning application.
- 1.18 The *'Maldon District Local Development Plan Preferred Growth Strategy Evidence Base Supporting Paper'* (June 2012), assessed the potential for between 100 to 150 dwellings at North Fambridge. This document, using the evidence from the *'Maldon District Infrastructure Delivery Plan'* (2012), noted that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate a significant development in North Fambridge. This evidence has not been updated.
- 1.19 There are no highway constraints that would prevent a significant residential allocation in North Fambridge.



### Sewerage

- 1.20 The Joint Position Statement on Development in North Fambridge (2014) states that there is sufficient capacity to accommodate the anticipated sewerage requirements, however it indicates that there would be a need for some upgrading that could potentially have a high capital cost. It is important to stress that this represents just one potential option and the Council has not fully investigated all potential options. In any event the capital cost is not so high that it would prevent the delivery of housing.
- 1.21 Once these works are completed, the potential sewerage capacity for North Fambridge will be greatly increased. The new works could accommodate well in excess of 1,000 additional dwellings.
- 1.22 Another important factor in the consideration of the North Fambridge allocation is the recent approval for a windfall development. On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014, the Council approved (subject to S106) a windfall development comprising 75 dwellings and a new village centre with 1,000 sq m of flexible floorspace. This windfall development has been permitted subject to a number of conditions, one of which seeks the implementation of a foul drainage solution.
- 1.23 It is anticipated that this windfall development alone would deliver the required infrastructure improvements that are necessary to deliver housing growth in the village. This will be delivered outside the development plan process, and will ensure that the viability of the allocation will be secured. Therefore the delivery of this windfall development removes any sewerage constraints in the village.
- 1.24 Given that the windfall development will deliver improved sewerage infrastructure, there is now considerably greater scope for an increased allocation at North Fambridge, well in excess of the 75 currently allocated. There are no infrastructure constraints that would prevent the original 300 dwelling allocation for North Fambridge from being allocated.



- 1.25 There are now no sewerage constraints that would prevent a significant allocation in North Fambridge.

Sustainability

- 1.26 As mentioned above, planning permission (Ref: 14/01016/OUT) was granted on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014 for a windfall development comprising 75 dwellings and a new 1,000 sq m village centre. This windfall development is located between the existing built-up areas in the village and as such would create a new community heart and focus.
- 1.27 This new village centre would generate significant employment opportunities in the village, greatly improving the economic and social sustainability of the village. Given these new economic opportunities, there is now a greater scope for an increased housing allocation that will support and build upon the opportunities presented by the new village centre.
- 1.28 Prior to the approval of this windfall development, the Council themselves had recognised the sustainability of the village in the LDP, citing its proximity to higher level services and sub-regional employment markets and presence of a train station.
- 1.29 The train station in the village is a tremendous public transport asset. It is one of only four stations in the District, but importantly it is the closest to neighbouring areas. Consequently it should be utilised by identifying North Fambridge as a location that can deliver enhanced strategic growth.
- 1.30 North Fambridge represents a sustainable location with an already committed 1,000 sq m village centre and established train station to a number of centres. As such, it should be identified for a significant residential allocation.



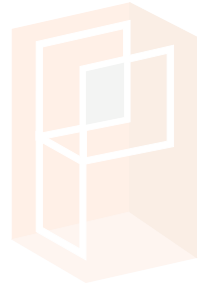
Enhanced Strategic Growth

- 1.31 It has always been our view that North Fambridge can accommodate a strategic development well in excess of 850 dwellings. This is set out under matters relating Policy S2. The only additional element of critical infrastructure required to deliver this growth in addition to the matters raised above, would be the delivery of a new primary school that would add to the village’s sustainability.
- 1.32 But not withstanding this, North Fambridge can accommodate well in excess of the 75 dwellings identified in the Local Development Plan. It is our view that the 300 dwellings originally proposed by the Council could still be accommodated in North Fambridge. The Council has not produced any evidence to demonstrate why this allocation was reduced.



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