St Lawrence Parish Council

Re: MALDON DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONSULTATION

Following the publication of the Maldon Local Development Plan Post Examination Sustainability Appraisal Report we wish to object to the assessment arrived at for:

APPENDIX C ALTERNATIVE SITE ASSESSMENT, Item S4 (St Lawrence) as a potential site.

SUMMARY:

The site outlined in the LDP is a field used for agricultural purposes situated off an unadopted and very substandard road at the end of a village which has only one access road and very limited infrastructure. As such this site is totally inappropriate for what is a major housing development in a small community. We do not feel that this site should remain in the LDP as it does not meet the policy requirements.

The Parish Council has always been clear that, given the poor infrastructure, no development other than individual plots where substandard properties are rebuilt is appropriate. This is not nimbyism. It is a realistic approach to the lack of infrastructure.

The Environment Agency frequently objects to proposals for development within the village given the flood risk and has taken the line that only replacement builds will be allowed. With so much of the village being in Flood Zones (including the only road in and out) it is a sensible approach. It needs to be remembered that this is technically an island and it is only the sea defences which stop it being one on a daily basis. Those defences are now some 20 years old and consequently are not regarded as of the latest standard. The 2013 storm surge came to within a few inches of the top.

ABOUT THE SITE:

The field is agricultural and is currently cultivated. Crops are a rotation of winter wheat, oil seed rape and peas. Approximately 25% of the field lies within Flood Zone 3 and the **only access** runs through the flood zone.

To the north and west of the site is a section of the village of that has grown haphazardly over the last 30 to 40 years. It cannot be described as “urban”. Prior to WW2 there were maybe 10 properties in the area, most being holiday homes. Post WW2 a number of (asbestos) shacks appeared and were used as holiday homes. In the 1970s there were probably no more than 10 houses occupied 52/7. Now there are no more than half a dozen holiday homes in this area. In total there are some 90 properties in this section of the village with approximately 10 occupied by families with children / teenagers. Of the rest well over half are occupied by retired people.

The only access to the site is a narrow, unadopted lane. This road is seriously substandard. It is single track with limited passing places. There is a tendency for it to flood at the lowest point. There are no pavements so pedestrians take their chances alongside cars and delivery vans and lorries. There is also no capability of widening the road.

As a village St Lawrence doesn’t do infrastructure. It has grown from a holiday community to a settlement of about 650 houses (plus a seasonal influx from 2 caravan sites) mainly from small developments. As a result there is no school, no medical facilities, and what can at best be described as a limited bus service. It is a community built around leisure / holidays that has grown into a residential area. There are no real employment opportunities. Car ownership is essential for employment, medical services and shopping and increasingly for education with typically 2 or more cars per household of more than 1 person. The telephone exchange is situated in Tillingham – some 5 miles away - so both telephones and internet are not brilliant. There is one small convenience store cum post office. There is one public open space (the Jubilee Field) which is well over half a mile from the proposed site. There is a fairly small village hall (on the Jubilee Field) which operates at over 80% capacity. In addition there is a small hall known as the Church Centre which is used by the community and again operates at a high level of capacity. The church itself is well outside the community. There has never been an affordable / social housing provision in the village probably partially due to the lack of infrastructure and partially due the lack of a traditional village community. The lack of employment and public transport is a negative for affordable / social housing. The only access to the village is a narrow no-through road. There is no alternative route in or out.

DETAIL
Appendix C pages 173 / 174

SA Objective	LDP Assessment	Parish Council comments	PC Assessment
1	-	The lack of proper public transport, inadequate roads and pavements and distance to major facilities from banks to doctors and schools is a major issue. The current bus service stops at about 5pm, involves changes to get to most destinations and does not run on Sundays at all. Note that the roads in the village – other than the spinal access road and in 2 modern estates are unadopted, and largely unmade.	--
2	+	There is currently a wide variety of housing available within the village although technically there is no “affordable” housing. There are a number of privately rented properties but most are owner occupied. Not all property in the village is top end. Local need has not been assessed – there are actually very few genuinely local people within the main village. It is only in recent years that there are more than a handful of second (or more) generation families. A large new development would therefore bring people into a community which they have no connection with and which would be treated as a dormitory. This has already happened to the village with a development of some 10 years ago. However that development is situated at the southern end of the village with direct access to the road out.	0
3	0	Note no local infrastructure for health care – and nearby GP practices are full and having problems recruiting replacement doctors. There is no school in the village so children are bussed out, This is a low crime community – probably largely due to poor access. Life expectancy seems to be pretty good given the number of nonagenarians in the village. Without a car it is almost impossible access services.	-
4	+	This proposal would do nothing to reduce rural isolation but would rather increase it as it would simply dump a large number of houses in an area that cannot support them.	-
5	-	Basically no viable public transport, cycle routes are irrelevant – there is nowhere to put them as the roads are too narrow. Car trips would increase.	---

6	0	There are buildings in the vicinity of the site which really should be listed to protect them. We have a railway carriage cottage – a sole survivor of a previous generation. There are wartime buildings – an early Nissan hut and shoreline defences. The lack of listing is probably more down to the isolated nature of the area – if they were in a town centre they would have been noticed.	0
7	--	The drainage ditch / watercourse on the eastern edge of the site drains into the Blackwater Estuary (a RAMSAR and SSSI). There are further SSSI sites to the south of the field. This is an important area for over-wintering birds with large flocks of Brent Geese and plovers among the species using the area. It is very common to see the field with large flocks of these birds during winter and spring. To call the area between the field and the Estuary "urban" is misleading. It is random village development with no structure. The "green" infrastructure consists of the sea wall (a vital defence for the community given that most of the village lies on the flood plain) and a public playing field over half a mile away.	---
8	0	Note that 25% of the site is Zone 3 Flood Plain. There is a drainage ditch / watercourse that runs along the eastern edge of the site which is piped and has an outlet on the shore by Stone Sailing Club. Increased traffic is likely to result in run-off of contaminated water which would run into the Blackwater Estuary (Ramsar and SSI). It is debateable whether the existing sewage / storm drain system would cope with such an increase. Water is supplied by Essex and Suffolk Water (not Anglian).	--
9	-	**Incorrect assessment here as 25% of the site is Flood Zone 3.** Most properties at this end of the village are within Flood Zone 3. There is protection in the form of a sea wall which was raised in height about 20 years ago. The storm surge of 2013 brought water levels very close to the lowest part of the defences – and if that had breached the proposed site would have been cut off. The issue here is tidal flood risks – not riverine. The basic soil type is London clay so SuDs schemes have limited use. Run off would increase flood risks elsewhere in the village.	--
10	-	The proposal would use agricultural land, not brownfield or similar.	-
11	-	Given the level of car usage that would result from this site CO^2 emissions would be	--

		increased. We estimate that 150 houses (a 23% increase for the whole village) would mean at least 300 more cars given the paucity of public transport and in excess of 600 additional car journeys per day on roads which could not support that increase and with no possibility of road improvements. There is no mains gas supply in the village, central heating systems being either oil or electric.	
12	-	See above - the build process alone would overwhelm the village. Getting lorries in to service a single rebuild can cause considerable issues.	--
13	-	A green lung would be lost.	-
14	--	A development of this scale and on this site would have a seriously detrimental effect on the countryside locally, turning a rural environment into a suburban one. This is a village but without the amenities traditional villages have. It cannot support more housing.	---
15	0	The site would not make any direct contribution to the local economy in terms of employment.	0
16	0	No effect on tourism	0
17	0	Probably no effect	0