

Mr L. Lewis,

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express my concerns in the seemingly contradictory statements and general format and administration of the revised LDP document produced by MDC and the detrimental effects it will have on the Dengie Peninsular if adopted.

As I am a resident of Althorne the following comments will particularly apply to this region.

It should be remembered that the following aims of the ' Village Design Statement ' for Althorne, was commended and supported by MDC and are as follows:

1. To protect and preserve the landscape and open spaces and views in and around the village of Althorne.
2. Conserve the rural character of the area.
3. That the Special Landscape Area should not be damaged by development.
4. The panoramic long distance views to the south over the 'special landscape area' and 'coastal zone' should be conserved for the enjoyment of everyone.
5. No development should be allowed which would compromise the open aspect of this area.
6. People in Althorne and all those travelling along the B1010 value the open landscape and rural views offered by the Crouch Valley.
7. Development outside the village development boundary should be avoided wherever possible.

The following observations are for your consideration.

Sustainability Assessment criteria.

Ref Appendix C. Item 4 on the SA/SEA Objectives for Sustainability ranking is:-

'To reduce rural isolation and social exclusion geographically and demographically through encouraging viable and vibrant communities'.

There seems to be a basic misunderstanding of why people choose to live in rural locations. If I wanted to reduce geographic isolation and experience more vibrancy, I would move back to London. People make conscious decisions to move to or stay in rural locations, and accept the disadvantages for the benefits of peace and tranquillity, and do not want to see that environment destroyed.

Change from Rural Allocations to identifying individual Sites. (Ref Appendix A, Page 23, Policy S7, Items 133,134 & 015)

This part of Appendix A informs us that the Parish Councils will be fully involved in the selection of suitable sites for development, and will get assistance from MDC to prepare supporting documents such as Neighbourhood Plans, and yet Appendix C indicates that a number of sites that appear on the latest SHLAA have already been chosen and had Sustainability Studies carried out on them.

This poses the questions:-

- Is there a contradiction here?
- What 'say' will the Parish Councils have on selecting the sites?
- Why were some of the SHLAA sites in the Parish areas not selected? Some sites to the north of the village, close to the only shop and regular bus stop and arguable nearer to the centre of the village were not selected. I think if the Parish Council were asked to select sites from the SHLAA, but outside the existing Development Boundaries, they would have chosen differently.
- Must any sites that are selected appear on the SHLAA first?
- What role has the Neighbourhood Plan got to play in the planning & development of these sites?
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- The initial concept of the LDP, we were told, was that MDC would inform the Parishes and Parish Councils of the number and type of dwellings required, who would compile Neighbourhood Plans to accommodate them. The Parish Councils would run through a defined process of consultation with Parishioners, carry out Sustainability and Infrastructure studies, to reach a consensus on the Neighbourhood Plan which would be agreed with MDC. It now appears that MDC will choose the sites.

Using the SHLAA as the only source of development land could be restrictive to the supply. There may be village residents who would wish to apply for planning permission to develop their property to provide extra dwellings, but who are currently restricted by Village Development Boundaries. Applications in this category could initially be considered by the Parish Councils.

Questions on the administration of the LDP.

- If a site is selected for development by MDC, must it be filled to capacity? Site S29 Land North of Althorne Station, will apparently accommodate 150 houses, which would be a considerable development for Althorne and a much larger allocation than is reasonable, particularly if S19 Land South of Button Hill is also selected.
- When a site is selected for development will it automatically be granted outline planning permission by MDC, or will the owner of the land have to apply for it? Could this application then be turned down by MDC or the Planning Inspectorate?
- If the owner of the site decided to sell it once it was selected, would it be with or without Planning Consent?
- Would the Parish Council or local residents be able to object to the granting of Planning Permission?

Appendix A, Page 2 (of pdf) Chapter 1 - Ref 130.

It is noted that the LDP will replace 2005b – Maldon Replacement Local Plan. The saved policies from this restricted development in, and provided protection for, the Coastal Zone and views across the Special Landscape Area. Consideration of site S29 Land North of Althorne Station, which is within the currently protected area, for development as part of the LDP would remove the protection of this asset, which is not only of value to the local parish, but also visitors and people passing through on the B1010. It is a major feature of the Parish, and preservation of the open views is part of the Village Design Statement (VDS) adopted by MDC as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Will these areas continue to be protected by the LDP? This is of real concern to the village.

Incidentally Station road is shown on the map on Appendix D (Page30) as a Minor Road, but is actually a Private Road (Network Rail) but with public access.

Appendix A, Page5 (of pdf) Policy S2, ref 045 Monitor and Review.

It should be made clear that this review action will be carried out against existing targets at the initiation of the LDP, and not against any revised targets set by central Government in future years, otherwise the targets could be ramped up and simply accommodated by releasing another identified site for development. The proposal to review progress, coupled with the ability to approve far more sites than necessary to meet initial targets seems to be open to abuse, to introduce far more development than initially envisaged. This could mean that the LDP at the end of its term would bear no resemblance to the LDP that had been approved and agreed at its outset. This would lead to a loss of confidence in the planning process.

Waste Water Treatment - Appendix A, Page 17(pdf) Ref 009 & 062

This section does not address issues specific to Althorne, and it is unclear whether Althorne is considered 'South Of Maldon', but there is an existing issue in Althorne where existing sewers are overloaded, resulting in sewage flooding the properties to the North of the village. Anglian Water is aware of this and is attempting to mitigate the issue, but it is clear that the present sewage infrastructure is at its limit.

There is no sewage system south of the B1010, apart from dwellings that line the south of the road, and all piped mains sewage from within the Parish boundary is channelled down Summerhill and eventually to the Water Treatment facility at Mill Road Mayland.

The cost of adding additional facilities to connect, say, the site S29 North of Althorne Station to the existing system, plus the upgrade required to the existing system, should be evaluated prior to considering this and other sites.

All of these issues would be considered in a Neighbourhood plan developed by Althorne Parish Council, plus other infrastructure considerations such as Broadband, electricity supplies, water & gas supplies and roads, but it seems that this process may have been bypassed.

Conclusion

The current documentation on the LDP as presented for consultation is contradictory, confusing, difficult and time consuming to evaluate fully by the people it affects.

I believe that the questions presented here should be answered, and a revised consolidated set of documents presented for another Consultation before it is presented to the Inspector again.

Yours faithfully

Mr. L. Lewis