

Maldon District Local Development Plan – Policy S2 : Strategic Growth

Representations of behalf of Edward Gittins & Associates

We have engaged with the Maldon Local Plan process for many years now on behalf of a portfolio of landowner clients. We have argued that the guiding principles of the Local Plan should be to provide a template that would make the District as a whole more sustainable and each individual settlement more sustainable as well.

Our earlier non-site specific representations have related to our vision for a sustainable pattern for future growth which supports the Council's strategy for focusing major growth at Maldon & Heybridge but differs in terms of how we see the pattern of growth elsewhere in the District. We initially advocated a central focus on Maldon & Heybridge with, inter alia, an inner concentric ring of villages earmarked for growth acting as service villages utilising links to Maldon & Heybridge by public transport. This strategic pattern of growth - spokes of a wheel with Maldon & Heybridge as its hub - also envisaged a lower level of dispersed growth to embrace villages further afield, but including some greater focus on key villages, to ensure an appropriate level of growth would be distributed throughout the District's rural areas.

Whilst our vision of the pattern for strategic growth is reflected in part in the distribution of growth in Policy S2, this is confined to the focus on the urban areas and we consider the provision outside the main urban centres to be totally inadequate.

The level of provision now envisaged for only 420 dwellings in the Rural Allocations category is regarded as derisory and arbitrary bearing in mind this category embraces many large and sustainable settlements. We do not consider such low levels of growth are conducive to meeting the needs of the rural communities or retaining and sustaining their rural facilities and services.

We are on record as being critical of the generality of the Local Plan's coverage for the villages and particularly the deferral of more detailed guidance to a separate DPD. We do not consider that this arrangement is in conformity with paragraphs 50,157 and 159 of the NPPF.

We therefore oppose both the low level of provision in 'Rural Allocations' in Policy S2 and consider that this should be significantly increased in order to meet the needs of the rural areas and to promote greater sustainability through the impetus this would give to the retention and strengthening of rural services.

