

St Lawrence Parish Council

Re: MALDON DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONSULTATION

We wish to object to **Section 3 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 with 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.

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 were 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 area is a narrow, unadopted road (ownership unclear). 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 is nowhere for footpaths 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 is more than a little lacking in infrastructure. It has grown from a holiday village to a settlement of about 650 houses (plus a seasonal influx from 2 caravan sites) but not mainly the result of large scale developments. As a result there is no school, no medical facilities, and what can at best be described as a limited bus service. There is a sailing club, a watersports club (both self-help) and two pubs. It's a community built around leisure / holidays that has grown into a residential area. There are no real employment opportunities. Car ownership is really essential for employment, medical services and shopping and increasingly for education. The telephone exchange is situated in Tillingham – some 5 miles away - so both telephones and internet are not brilliant. Superfast it is not! There is one small convenience store cum post office. So far as community areas are concerned there is one 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% of 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.

DETAIL

Re Table 8 / Appendix C

SA Objective	LDP Assessment	Parish Council comments	PC Assessment
1	-	Given the lack of proper public transport, inadequate roads and pavements and distance to major facilities such as banks this needs to be more negative. 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 maps included with the LDP have some interesting designations of roads within the village suggesting that a number –	--

		including private roads are village streets. One can only assume that this side of things has been a purely paper exercise as the issues would have been obvious if someone had visited the site.	
2	+	There is currently a wide variety of housing available within the village although technically there is no “affordable” housing. Local need has not been assessed. The last major development in the village brought outsiders in and 10 years on integration is minimal – most bought on price, not the area. The story is that they do not even realise that they live in a village with a waterfront. The saving grace on that development is that it is on the southern outskirts of the village, so they do not have to navigate the narrow substandard roads to escape!	0
3	0	Note no local infrastructure for health care – and nearby GP practices are close to 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 largely irrelevant – there is nowhere to put them (cycling is not allowed on the seawall – the only alternative to the road). Car trips would increase.	---
6	0		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 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.	
9	-	See above. 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 close to the lowest part of the defences – and if that had breached the proposed site would have been cut off. 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.	--
13	-		-
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.	---
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

APPENDIX A

Policy S7, ref 133: The Parish has always been clear that without major infrastructure input, which 150 houses would not enable, there is no scope for development within the parish boundaries other than individual units, mainly being redevelopment of sub-standard properties.

Policy D5, ref 021 – 022: We feel that this proposed development site would compromise the safety of existing property from flooding.

Policy E1, ref 118: It is worth noting that for residents of St Lawrence a car is essential to reach employment opportunities.

Policy I2, ref 055: Access to NHS services is a major issue and the policy wording could be strengthened.