

Basildon Borough Local Plan – consultation on Alternative and New Sites

Alternative Site 4 – Outwood Farm Billericay

(currently identified as an ‘Alternative’ to Policy H26 - Land east of Greens Farm Lane.)

Comment of behalf of the Mill Meadows Society

This comment, on behalf of The Mill Meadows Society, is concerned with the impact on Mill Meadows Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and is not concerned with issues of urban sprawl, services or infrastructure. The Society recognise that there are issues in these implications of the proposed development and encourages its members to submit their own comments as local residents. As per the Society’s technical comments on Policy H26 Land East of Greens Farm Lane, any suggestions do not imply support of any planning application nor imply that The Society accept that there is necessity to build on Green Belt Land near Billericay.

The Society is in principle opposed to any development east of Mill Meadows LNR. This is because LNR already has housing on 3 sides and any development to the east will compromise the tenuous wildlife corridor that exists.

Comments:

1. The representation submitted by NLP on 24th March 2016 (their ref 13793/SSL/SWt/10983260v1) mentions Mill Meadows LNR as a local facility but completely ignores the impact that development at Outwood Farm Road would have on the LNR and any other local natural history. Any additional housing in proximity to Mill Meadows will cause a spike in recreational use of the Local Nature Reserve. Whereas an increase in use of the LNR is positive in that more of the community benefit from the Nature Reserve there are risks of consequential damage:
 - a. Increased footfall and therefore widening of the PROW and Marked Trail through the site
 - b. vulnerability of cattle,
 - c. risk of increased dog mess and vandalism

The representation makes no acknowledgement of the impact or proposals as to how this would be mitigated.

2. The representation by NPL makes no mention of the site being within the Living Landscape Area 34. The Vision Document for this area states the importance of the wildlife corridor passing through the proposed development site at Outwood Farm Road. This wildlife corridor comprises of mature hedgerows and scattered trees and some elements of field margins which enables the movement and propagation of birds, bats, invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians between Mill Meadows LNR and the wider Living Landscape around Ramsden Heath. Species such as Bullfinch, Stoat, Weasel, and some bat species which are still recorded occasionally but very rarely, would

probably disappear altogether from Mill Meadows without the wildlife corridor. Also Climate Change is causing a shift in local species, and the wildlife corridor is a vital link for new species to spread their range, such as Marbled White butterflies which are appearing more frequently on Mill Meadows.

The proximity of housing to the hedgerows around Outwood Farm Road and the tributary which feeds the River Crouch would compromise the value of this corridor because of disturbance and incursion into habitats.

3. The combination of development on this site and development on New Site 1 would worsen the situation. Mill Meadows and the site East of Green Farm Lane would become one 'island' with no wildlife corridor causing real damage to local biodiversity.
4. For the site East of the Greens Farm Lane, the applicant has acknowledged the wildlife corridor and shown some vision in mitigating this with a proposal to extend Mill Meadows LNR. NLP has shown no similar concern for biodiversity or the local community enjoyment of wildlife in their submission.
5. NLP's document states that "the proposed development at Outwood Farm would in adherence with para. 73 of the NPPF provide access high quality open spaces and new residents would have access to opportunities for sport and recreation". However, it makes no proposals for how this access will be provided and how the increased footfall in the LNR could be mitigated.
6. If any development does proceed on this site it should only do so by incorporating a wide green corridor around the river and PROW, incorporating a mix of habitats which are in part protected from incursion by people and their pets and link to appropriate points to the east and west of the site, to provide a wildlife corridor and hence meet the objective set in the NPPF to protect and enhance biodiversity.

New Site: Land South of Outwood Farm Road

Comment of behalf of the Mill Meadows Society

This comment, on behalf of The Mill Meadows Society, is concerned with the impact on Mill Meadows Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and is not concerned with issues of urban sprawl, services or infrastructure. The Society recognises that there are issues in these aspects of the proposed development and encourages its members to submit their own comments as local residents. As per the Society's technical comments on Policy H26 Land East of Greens Farm Lane, any suggestions do not imply support of any planning application nor imply that The Society accept that there is a necessity to build on Green Belt Land near Billericay.

The Society is in principle opposed to any development east of Mill Meadows LNR. The LNR already has housing on 3 sides and any development to the east will compromise the tenuous wildlife corridor that exists.

Any additional housing in proximity to Mill Meadows LNR will cause a spike in recreational use of the Local Nature Reserve. Whereas an increase in use of the LNR is positive in that more of the community benefit from the Nature Reserve, there are risks of consequential damage:

- a. Increased footfall and therefore widening of the PROW and Marked Trail through the site
- b. vulnerability of cattle,
- c. risk of increased dog mess and vandalism

The representation makes no acknowledgement of the impact or proposals as to how this would be mitigated.

The representation makes no mention of the site being within the Living Landscape Area 34. The Vision Document for this area states the importance of the wildlife corridor passing through the north of this site and the adjacent proposed Alternative Site 4 Outwood Farm Road.

This wildlife corridor comprises of mature hedgerows and scattered trees and some elements of field margins which enables the movement and propagation of birds, bats, invertebrates, reptiles and amphibians between Mill Meadows LNR and the wider Living Landscape around Ramsden Heath.

The proposal for this site, south of Outwood Farm Road, has to be considered with 3 possible scenarios and any planning application must pay due regard to protecting and enhancing biodiversity as per the NPPF for the appropriate scenario. Hence planning consent should not be given for this site until a decision is made on Land East of Greens Farm Lane and Alternative Site 4.

The scenarios are:

- a) with development on Alternative Site 4. In this scenario, Mill Meadows and the site East of Green Farm Lane would become one 'island' with no wildlife corridor, causing real damage to local biodiversity.
- b) with development on the site East of Greens Farm Lane, incorporating the Mill Meadows Extension. In this scenario, any proposal for this site should ensure that there is a wide green corridor at the north end of the site, incorporating a mix of habitats which are, in part, protected from incursion by people, dogs and cats and link to appropriate points to the east and west of the site, to provide a wildlife corridor.
- c) With no development on either Alternative Site 4 or East of Greens Farm Lane, the planning application should ensure that the existing wildlife corridor is not compromised. Hence tree and hedge lines along Outwood Common

Road at the north end of the proposed site are protected and the development should include a buffer area between housing and this hedge line.