

# Dedham Vale Society

Workhouse Cottage,  
Workhouse Lane,  
Little Horkesley,  
Colchester CO6 4DS

May 2016

Colchester Borough Council  
(attn. Simon Cairns),  
PO Box 889,  
Rowan House,  
33 Sheepen House,  
Colchester CO3 3WG

Dear Mr Allen,

**Application No: 160906**

**Location: Land adjoining Church of All Saints London Road, Great Horkesley**

**Proposal: The removal of the existing glasshouses and ancillary buildings, change of use and replacement with a new residential scheme .....**

The Dedham Vale Society objects to the above application and would like to raise a number of points for consideration by the Council in connection with it.

The site is currently an eyesore on the edge of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Indeed action to remove the dereliction is long overdue particularly as heating pipes installed in the 1950s/60s almost certainly contain asbestos which may be a health hazard.

Both H & W Park and Mersea Homes have conducted a twelve month consultation with the public, local parish councils and conservation groups and many comments are reflected in the final design of the application.

The "hamlet" is well designed with a mix of properties and their design does reflect the architectural styles in surrounding villages and has gathered much local interest and support all of which is excellent.

However, there are a number of concerns to be addressed which affect planning policy across the Borough.

1. When the original application was made to create the glasshouses, an application must have been made for a change of use from agriculture to horticulture. It is understood that when a horticultural use is no longer in place the land reverts to agricultural.

In this case it appears that the assumption is that the site has become "Brownfield" and, therefore, ripe for development.

The Council need to be convinced that any land in the countryside used for farming or other use can thereby be judged as "Brownfield".

2. The Colchester Plan (Development Policy 24 Dedham Vale AONB) and the National Planning Policy Framework (Sections 115/116 National Parks, AONBs and the Broads) are the documents which provide a framework within which planning, or near, the AONB is progressed in the Borough. This site was not designated as a "development site" within the existing Colchester Plan and on that basis alone the application should be rejected.

However, there is the route adopted by Wilkins in Tiptree of seeking a re-examination of the existing Local Plan which allowed the area they required to build on to become a designated “development site”.

The situation is confused by the fact that the new Colchester Plan 2017/32 is currently under review. H & W Park/Mersea Homes in the “call for sites” as part of the review applied for an area much greater than the existing glasshouses site to be included as a “development site”.

It is logical that this application, which does not meet the requirements of the existing plan, should be refused until approval of the 2017/32 Plan has been fully approved by the Planning Inspectorate and Colchester Borough Council.

3. The issue of precedent should be a key consideration. Under the review discussed above many areas of agricultural land right across the Borough were submitted under the “call for sites” by Landowners seeking to maximise the value of their holdings.

If planning permission were to be granted on the glasshouses site, it would set a precedent for a wholesale conversion of potentially good agricultural land to be used for residential homes.

Again any planning decision should await final ratification of the Colchester Plan 2017/32.

4. In considering any application the surrounding area must receive due consideration. Within a few hundred metres of the site are the Grade 1 listed All Saints Church and the Grade 2 Chantry. These are important to the cultural heritage of the Borough and need to be protected by covenants on the surrounding land being in place to prevent any further building in this sensitive and historically important area.

In considering this application the Council must take into account:

- The designation of the land

The land has always been used for agricultural/horticultural purposes – how is it converted into a site for residential development?

- Colchester Plan

Should the recommendations of the Local Plan be abandoned for a small residential development which has nothing to do with achieving Borough housing targets?

Should the consideration of the application be deferred until the Colchester Plan 2017/32 is ratified and in place?

- Precedent

Would approval of this application to build on agricultural/horticultural land set a precedent for other such applications across the Borough?

- Cultural Heritage

Does the application sufficiently protect the Cultural Heritage of this sensitive area of the Borough neighbouring the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

On balance the Dedham Vale Society recommends that the application be rejected as an infringement to the countryside.

Yours sincerely,

J R Drury  
DVS Essex Planning Secretary