

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE ON 15th September 2026

Item 6 – 25/01158/OUT – Land West of Barbrook Way, Priory Road, Bicknacre, Chelmsford, Essex

Question from Mrs E

As I am unable to attend the meeting on Tuesday due to prior arrangements, I feel that I need to at least reiterate my concerns re this ludicrous application which is madness in its entirety.

I have lived in Thrift Wood, which is on the same estate as Barbrook Way for 30 years.

My main concerns are the following:-

1 Access for residents of said 250 properties being the small road Barbrook Way, which is already quite congested with vehicles belonging to current residents parked in the road. Potentially this could mean 500+ vehicles each day. The school bus for Sandon School collects students via double decker bus twice a day at the corner of Barbrook Way. This would be a huge safety risk for everyone concerned.

2 The total lack of infrastructure ie Doctors, Dentists, School places, public transport and parking

3 Destruction of green spaces and wildlife in this area.

4 The huge increase in traffic through the village and surrounding villages, which is already increasing.

5 There are already unsold new build properties in the village which have been vacant for over two years

6 The potential effect on house prices in the immediate vicinity

My question is:

Is the plan to basically do away with any villages and just join them all together with towns and cities, which are also struggling with facilities and funding.

Question from Mr C

One of the key concerns of residents in the village is the proposal to access the site via Barbrook Way. Unfortunately, the comments from ECC Highways and the statements in the agenda pack do nothing to alleviate those concerns.

Barbrook Way is a cul-de-sac, not a through road, and currently serves about 150 homes at the edge of the village. Building an extra 250 houses at the end of the road would make the new housing estate one large cul-de-sac.

The Essex Design Guide states that cul-de-sacs should be limited in number and restricted to those parts of a site which cannot be served in any other way. Dead-end housing estates force all local traffic into a single entry and exit point, so that drivers have zero alternative paths if the road is blocked. They create car-dependent, inefficient neighbourhoods with restricted connectivity, and it makes public transport options unworkable. This raises serious and legitimate concerns about the suitability and safety of the proposed site access, which have not been addressed.

ECC Highways have stated that Barbrook Way closely resembles a Type D Feeder Road in the current design guidance. However, there is no mention of the fact that Barbrook Way narrows to form an Access Road as it turns the corner to the proposed site entrance. The Essex Design Guide states that there should be a maximum of 200 units for an Access Road to a cul-de-sac. This scheme would route every vehicle movement from 250 new houses – in addition to the existing homes, down one residential street that was never built to carry it.

Based on this my questions are: why have the problems regarding access not been addressed by ECC Highways when considering this application, and specifically, why is the advice regarding cul-de-sacs in the Essex Design Guide being ignored?

Question from Mrs B

I want to raise three problems with the process behind this application.

This scheme depends on a Local Plan allocation that hasn't been tested. Government policy is clear that an application should be refused for prematurity where it's substantial enough to pre-empt decisions about scale and location in an emerging plan, and that plan has to be advanced but not yet adopted. Both apply here. The examination hearings on this allocation don't start until November, and the officer's report itself records a significant number of unresolved objections to it. Grant this now, and you've settled the question before the examination gets anywhere near it.

There's also a problem with how that allocation came about. When this land first went into the Local Plan review, it was for one hectare and around 20 homes. Nobody has independently examined it since. What changed was a "Focused Consultation" the Council needed, by its own account, to shore up its housing land supply figures. The number went up more than tenfold with no public scrutiny of whether that increase is justified. There is also a significant change in access from the proposed Local Plan that has dual access via Priory Road and/or Barbrook Way. This is a major area of concern for residents.

Then there's access. The strip of land between Barbrook Way and the site is unregistered. Its likely owner, a company called SBI Property, was dissolved years ago. The applicant doesn't seem to own that land and doesn't control it. The officer's answer is to assume Essex Highways will adopt it later under section 228 of the Highways Act, an assumption the parish council itself doesn't think will survive public

notice. What you're being asked to approve is an access the applicant currently has no legal right to use.

I'd ask you to refuse the application. Thank you.

Question from Mrs H

I wish to speak about the harms in this scheme, whatever view you take on the principle of development here.

The officer's report accepts that even with landscaping, this proposal would still harm the character and appearance of the countryside. That's the permanent loss of almost 18 hectares of open farmland on the edge of a rural village, and it deserves more weight in the balance than a passing mention.

The education figures in the report don't add up either. This development alone is expected to generate a need for 75 primary school places. The nearest school, Priory, has only 52 spare, which is already short before a single other house in Bicknacre gets built. The nearest secondary school is over three miles away, and all this scheme offers those pupils is a bus contribution rather than a place at a desk. Even the nursery that is meant to serve these 250 homes has no confirmed builder; the report says outright that it isn't known who would build it. Money in a Section 106 agreement doesn't create a school place that doesn't exist.

None of this is happening on its own. Residents are concerned about cumulative growth across the surrounding villages, and the Wyncroft GP surgery is already over capacity before this development adds a single patient.

Taken together, that's enough to justify refusal.

Question from Mr G

I had intended to speak tonight with righteous anger. Anger at the further destruction of our rural villages. Anger at the council departments who have sworn blind that square pegs will fit round holes, despite evidence such as the snarled roads around the heavily developed Maldon area acting as almost daily contradictions. Anger at how families who have worked hard to afford properties in Bicknacre exactly because it is rural and offers them and their families the lives they have dreamt of, are ignored. Anger at a system seemingly designed to drive people into either apathy or fatalism, as they are asked again and again to object presumably in the hope that those objections will see diminishing returns, anger at a system that invites people who will be most affected by proposals like the one at Barbrook Way to air their objections while simultaneously and calculatingly telling them the proposal is up for approval anyway and thus further pushes them towards resignation and apathy and therefore lessens the likelihood that they will speak up, but also gives any who do just 2 minutes to directly address decision makers while the businesses that will profit have had months, or years.

But to speak purely from anger would be to do a disservice to the community I'm here to represent. A community who are friendly, kind, and compassionate.

So what I will say is that the role of any elected council is to represent its people, and despite the aforementioned system those people have not been driven to apathy and

fatalism and resignation but instead have raised their objections and feelings time and again to overwhelmingly reject this development.

Question from Mrs B

We border Leighams Farm and sit outside the village boundary. The neighbouring land directly adjacent to our barn is the land proposed for this development.

Whilst there are many valid reasons to object, we keep coming back to one question:

How can the Council tell us our barn development must be “in keeping with the rural character of the area” just three years ago, yet now can consider a road, an early years setting and 250 houses directly behind it?

We accepted those restrictions because we understood the importance of protecting this rural setting.

This isn't about opposing to change. It's unreasonable and unfair and not consistent.

If the rural character mattered enough to restrict our development three years ago, what has changed to make this scale of development appropriate now?

We simply ask that the same principles applied to us are considered here

Question from Mr C

Bicknacre is a village with a centre based around The Post Office, The Shops including the proposed Supermarket, The Swan Public House, A Pre School Nursery, The Bus Stop, the nearby White Elm Garden Centre with its Petting Farm, Tea Room and The Shopping Village and most importantly Priory Primary School. If houses are required siting them close to the local facilities would discourage the use of the private car, particularly for short or local trips and those wishing to use the bus and help to meet the requirements for Sustainability in the Essex Design Plan.

Currently it is rare to have a clear run when driving down Barbrook Way and clearly this will be a much bigger problem when it is servicing 377 houses. Frequently it is necessary to give way to oncoming traffic by pulling in behind parked cars/delivery vans. To discourage inappropriate traffic from travelling through Barbrook Way an alternative entrance to the site should be provided e.g. from Bicknacre Road rather than Priory Road and Barbrook Way. This is particularly important during the development stage with its movement of heavy plant, machinery, delivery lorries etc.

Village boundaries are planning tools used to define where the built-up area ends and open countryside begins. They guide decisions about where development is allowed. Village/settlement boundaries are drawn by the local planning authority as part of the Local Plan so why are you considering a development which is partially in East Hanningfield?

Question from Mrs C

I am 87 and have lived in Bicknacre over 50 years, It is a friendly cohesive village.

The government is urging us to stockpile food in the face of world unrest and food shortages.

I recall as a young evacuee living in the countryside during the 1940s that food was scarce. We salvaged grain to feed the chickens and any root crops left in the fields after the harvest.

School children were paid money for collecting Rose Hips from the hedges to provide Vitamin C Syrup.

Dig for Britain really did save us.

I am appalled at the intentions to build over good Agricultural land which we might need to save us and our children again.

Question from Mrs H

Chair, thank you. I would like to look at the ecology case here, because it isn't as settled as the summary makes out.

The updated bat survey lost all its data for August, and part of July, just as juveniles are on the wing and adults are feeding hard before hibernation. Even with that gap, the surviving data still picked up over 1,500 passes in October alone, across seven species, and at least nine species overall on this site, including the rare barbastelle. Residents monitoring their own gardens on Barbrook Way have recorded the same bats along the boundary, foraging across the site. The answer to all this as mitigation is a sensitive lighting scheme, on a field that's currently pitch black at night and about to get 250 new homes. Once that light goes up, it stays up.

A lot of the ecology also comes down to whether you accept the applicant's ecologist or the people who live next to this field, as I have done for over 50 years. The ecologist says reptile surveys aren't needed unless grazing stops and the grass grows; neighbours who watch that field daily say the grazing being described isn't happening. The ecologist says there's too little water flow for otters; people living beside that brook say there's plenty. The ecologist says the development won't touch the watercourses, yet the drainage basins are going in right next to the brook. And on dormice, the answer to losing hedgerow connectivity is to point at the Drunken Dragon site down the road, where none were found, though that hedgerow is fragmented now as well.

Then there's the headline figure. This scheme is supposed to deliver a ten percent gain in biodiversity, but that's measured against Essex Field Record data and limited observations on land that's been in private hands and never properly surveyed. You cannot prove a gain against a baseline nobody's actually recorded.

I'd ask you to refuse the application. Thank you.

Question from Mr T

Thank you chair, and good evening, members. My name is xxx; I am a Planner at CODE Development Planners who are the agent on behalf of the applicant Welbeck Land.

This application responds to a pressing need for new market and affordable housing in the district. In light of the housing land supply shortfall, and an adopted local plan which does not meet identified needs, policy S5 of the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that the proposals should be approved unless the adverse impacts of doing so would substantially outweigh the benefits. As outlined in the officer's report, any adverse impacts of the proposals are limited, and are clearly outweighed by the substantial benefits which include:

- The provision of 162 market homes,
- 88 new affordable homes,
- 5% provision self-build plots
- 750 new trees to be planted as part of the proposals
- Substantial open space provision of 9.2ha
- On-site biodiversity net gain; and
- Provision of land for new nursery and community facility

Through the development of the proposals and throughout the determination period, we have worked closely with officers and statutory consultees, to ensure that there are no technical objections to the proposals.

While the proposals are in outline, the application demonstrates that the development can be carried out utilising good design and place making principles, and the scheme will not adversely impact the living environment of existing residents. The site is physically well-related to the settlement and Bicknacre as a key service settlement in the local plan is recognised as a sustainable location for growth.

It is important to recognise that the principle of new residential development on this site has already been considered and agreed by the Council in the decision to allocate the site in the emerging local plan. The submission of the local plan for examination reflects the Council's position that the proposed policies and allocations, including this site, are sound. Your decision tonight therefore rests on whether the scheme appropriately responds to adopted, emerging and national planning policies. The proposals have been positively designed to ensure that they align with the requirements of the emerging allocation as well as comply with the development plan as a whole.

Therefore, we respectfully request that outline planning permission is granted for the proposals.