

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING – 2 JUNE

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Public Question from Mrs M

Question:

Given that the Local Plan being submitted for examination contains no reference to equestrians, bridleways, Public Rights of Way or multi-user routes — despite Chelmsford's extensive rural network and national policy requirements for inclusive access — can the Council explain why these user groups and routes have been omitted from the evidence base and policy wording, and what assessment has been made of the Plan's impact on equestrian safety and rural connectivity?

Supporting Statement:

The Essex Bridleways Association (EBA) submits this statement in support of our public question on Item 5 of the agenda. Chelmsford is several rural districts with an extensive but disjointed network of bridleways, byways and rural lanes used daily by equestrians, walkers and cyclists. Yet the Local Plan being submitted for examination contains no reference to equestrians, bridleways, Public Rights of Way or multi-user routes, despite clear national policy requirements for inclusive access and safe, connected active-travel networks.

This omission has direct safety implications. Horse riders are legally classed as vulnerable road users, and rural lanes in Chelmsford already experience high volumes of fast-moving traffic. Without proper assessment, the Plan risks increasing conflict on these roads, particularly around large greenfield allocations where traffic growth is expected. The absence of any equestrian safety baseline, collision analysis or mitigation strategy represents a significant gap in the evidence base.

It is also an equality issue. Equestrians form a recognised non-motorised user group under national guidance, and their exclusion from the Plan's active-travel and green-infrastructure policies means they are not afforded the same consideration as walkers and cyclists. This undermines the principle of equal access to the countryside, which is central to the NPPF and to Essex's own Rights of Way Improvement Plan. Finally, this is a missed opportunity for access and connectivity. Strategic sites could deliver safe, off-road multi-user routes that benefit all non-motorised users, reduce pressure on rural lanes, and strengthen the district's green-infrastructure network. Without explicit policy requirements, these opportunities will be lost.

We therefore ask the Council to explain why equestrians and the PRoW network have been omitted from the Local Plan submission, and how the safety and access needs of this user group will be addressed before the Plan proceeds to examination. Would you please confirm this submission will be included.

2. Public Question from Mrs B

Will the change in control of Essex County Council affect the submission of the Local Plan or its implementation if it is agreed?

If so, in what way?

3. Public Question from Mrs W

Regarding site 20 in rettendon how do the council think it's acceptable to burden a small rural beautiful village with potentially upto 700 homes? The developer has put in for 350 homes however on their website they were promoting the site for 700 homes so if you allow this it won't stop at 350 I've attached a screen shot from croudaces website. In a world where our wildlife is constantly under threat and losing their homes and people are in a position to prevent this why can't they? There is numerous species of wildlife that call this land their home including red kites, bats , buzzards, barn owls, turtle doves, hares to name a few and if you approve this you are destroying their home. There is no proper infrastructure for a development of this size it just doesn't not make sense when there is more suitable sites to approve. Not only that you will ruin rettendon village and there will be no going back once you approve this. I just can't get in my head how anyone can think this is a sound plan it is far from it and the effects will be detrimental to locals and wildlife. Rettendon is not screaming out for new homes as it is we have a bus service that runs every hour, a school that is at full capacity, a road through that is constantly congested no matter what time you use it. So my question is have you thought about the residents who don't want this along with the parish council, the wildlife that has no choice in the matter or is it all about helping a developer out who make millions and millions every year by ripping up the countryside and putting housing estates on it. This will forever be a stain on our village. How amazing would it be one day to look back and say I saved that countryside from being destroyed with houses

4. Public Question from Mrs W

I am a local resident of rettendon and I strongly object ro the Rettendon location 20 development plan.The proposed site is totally out of character with the surrounding area and the removal of the trees and hedgerows will negatively impact local biodiversity and protected species habitat. The negative impact this development will have on both humans and animals is immense, and the living conditions of residents will be severely damaged the traffic will not be sustainable in our small village, is there anyone with a conscience to fight this and stop the destruction and total disregard for the people that live in the village and their lives her i dot want my grandchildren growing up not knowing what a fox badger hedgehog field mouse or a bat looks like please stop this now.