

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC TO THE CABINET MEETING ON 8 JUNE 2021

Item 6.1 - Land East of Chelmsford Masterplan

1. David Pallash

I am writing to voice my concern and pose questions for the June 8 meeting on the East Chelmsford Masterplan for sites 3b, 3c and 3d. Having read the overview, it worries me that large sections of the location's biodiversity have been left out and are not represented.

The wider site including Manor Farm has been subject to constant wildlife recording for 4 years now and the lack of reference to this is disconcerting.

Sites 3b, 3c and 3d hold red and amber listed breeding birds that typically migrate and choose the same location year on year. To point to 3.34 in the overview report, "No Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) were recorded in the wider landscape". Without questioning the capabilities of the ecology consultants hired to the project, this is simply untrue. Red list breeding birds include: yellow wagtail, linnet, yellowhammer and skylark - all of which of which are nationally struggling partly because of developments like these and loss of suitable habitat.

Amber list breeding birds include Reed bunting. Peregrine falcons are also currently nesting on a pylon situated in the field next to Sandon school (site 3c).

The location also provides wintering grounds for other red listed birds such as meadow pipit (in flocks of 100+) and corn bunting.

I have provided details of my records previously to the Great Baddow group to pass on and a link to observed species can be shared on request. The wider landscape has a good number of other red list birds in including a recently established and highly sensitive population of nightingale (Manor farm woodland) and water voles colonising the run off CDy channels.

So my questions to pose to the council to consider are as follows:

Why has a seemingly insufficient level of ecological assessment been carried out, with basic red-listed breeding species of the area not recorded?

Why haven't my records been incorporated by the ecologists involved?

When we hear about net positive biodiversity gain from the developments, I would love this elaborated on. It's very easy to state this but with the loss of habitat for a fair number of red listed birds, how will this be balanced? Please can they list the specific species they feel will benefit and how they will compensate those that will be losing out? (Creation of equivalent habitat nearby?)

How will the badger set be handled?

To say I'm disappointed that this development may go ahead is a huge understatement. At a time when biodiversity and this country's wildlife needs our help, developments like this prove again that decision makers involved hold the wrong priorities.

2. Geoff Pickford – Resident of Great Baddow

I question why are the Council, the Administration and the Developers so anxious to get this Development approved without waiting for the second half of the Masterplan from Hoskins? We now have the second iteration of the Redrow Masterplan published, some 80 odd pages of mainly marketing literature, but nonetheless, it is available. From Hopkins, nothing, except a joint 3-page statement with Redrow stating they are working closely together on their Masterplans, but apparently Hopkin's plan isn't yet available.

Is there something that the public are not being made aware of? Is there a reason for Hopkins not to publish their Masterplan?

These two Plans are very much symbiotic, one cannot exist alone without major restructuring and planning, so why not wait for the Hopkins Masterplan to be published and allow for scrutiny from all interested parties, the Council included, and go through the same procedure as Redrow's? Additionally, the developers have a duty of care, as does the council, that residents are confident, understand impacts and are informed of the risks and rewards of development, so why not wait?

The timeline will not be delayed significantly by delaying the approval on the next stage of this development until both masterplans are available.

I would expect that the Councillors, especially those who represent the Great Baddow Wards, vote with their consciences and reflect the wishes and concerns of the residents of Great Baddow, rather than under instruction, and do not vote in favour of this approval until Hopkins Masterplan is published, and is available for full scrutiny and critique by all interested parties.

I first thought that with a development of this size, the project would be structured with the Council Planning Department acting as owners and project manager, but this does not seem to be the case.

The Council Planning Department are, in essence, no more than a rubber stamp for the developers. They perform the check and balance to verify that the developers meet the Council's brief, are acting within existing planning laws and statutes and meet the any additional criteria that is laid down by local authorities.

Then, when the developer's Masterplan is rubber stamped and approved by the Council the project is handed over to the Developers to run and manage it themselves. They have no hard and fast deadlines to meet, probably no penalty charges if they overrun or fail to complete.

They can decide that the current economic climate is not favourable, and they will not get an adequate Return on Investment, unless they increase the density of the housing, i.e., Squeeze more homes in than the original Masterplan proposed. It could be decided that it is not cost effective to develop the country park, for instance.

The council then has no option but to accept these changes or risk putting the Development into jeopardy.

Therefore, it is essential that **both** Masterplans are fully scrutinised, and that all Duty of Care responsibilities have been met before any further approval.

Instead, though, the Council seem quite content on giving approval based on a Letter of Intent, which, in effect, is what the Redrow/Hopkins joint statement is.

“Trust Me, I’m a builder”, who would accept that statement on face value?

In conclusion I would reiterate, the Council should not approve any move forward on this development until at such time that Hopkins publish their Master Plan and it is available to all interested parties. They need to prove that due diligence has been fully completed and that we are not left with a similar situation where Hopkins designating a Private Club’s Carp Fishery as a “dipping pond”, which highlights why the level of confidence the residents have in these developers is so low.

Item 6.3 – Review of CIL Governance Arrangements

1. John Hammond – Chelmsford Cycling Action Group

Why is the allocation to cycling infrastructure so small?

I suggest a regular report should be published showing the progress position on schemes which will help cyclists, including the lead organisation and funding sources. There should be regular monitoring updates so that schemes don’t get forgotten if there are problems with delivery.

For example, technical design resources were used to prepare a scheme on Princes Road serving the schools and college, to be implemented in the summer holiday 2016. When is it going to happen?

Developer contributions from the planning permission for Bond Street were stated to be used for a river bridge for cycling between Waterloo Lane and Tesco. When is that going to happen?