

# Land rear of No's 1 - 4 Council Houses, Colchester Road, Wix

Erection of eight dwellings

Planning Statement



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Stanfords

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Mr M. De Roy and is submitted in support of an outline planning application for the erection of four pairs of semi-detached dwellings to the rear of No's 1 - 4 Council Houses, Colchester Road, Wix.
- 1.2 This statement should be treated as forming part of the application, and includes details on the site and its surroundings, the intended scheme and how it relates to adopted and emerging planning policies. Although the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2013 removed the requirement for Design and Access Statements to be submitted with minor planning applications, this statement is submitted to explain the rationale behind the development to assist the Local Planning Authority in making its decision.

## **2.0 Site and Surroundings**

- 2.1 The site measures approximately 0.34 hectares, is roughly rectangular and is situated to the north of Colchester Road, Wix. It is an area of grass located to the rear of the back gardens for No's 1- 4 Council Houses, although unconnected to any of the neighbouring properties. The land is enclosed within a 2m high security fence with an access gate at the southwestern corner leading onto a private lane. The lane runs alongside No.1 Council Houses and extends through from Colchester Road to the A120. It provides access not only to the application site but also to allotment gardens located to the east of the site. A further access also serves a reservoir to the west operated by Anglian Water.
- 2.2 The track has a consolidated surface and for most of its length is single width. However, a verge extends to either side with informal passing bays. The bellmouth at the junction with Colchester Road comprises land owned by Essex County Council as highway land together with an extensive verge along the north side of the carriageway. Details of the extent of the highway land is shown on the plan provided by Ringway Jacobs attached and forming part of the application. The access onto Colchester Road is within the 30mph speed restricted zone. Visibility splays are available within land

forming part of the highway measuring 2.4m x 43m to the east and 2.4m x 43m to the west. It is apparent that a hedgerow extends across the visibility splay to the west, and ECC Highways Regulatory and Compliance officer has confirmed that this defect will be attended to by the highway authority. A public footway extends along the north side of Colchester Road from the junction of the lane up to the centre of the village, leading past both the primary school and village shop/post office. The village centre is served by regular bus services (No's 102 & 104) from Colchester bus station through to Manningtree and Harwich.

### **3.0 Relevant Planning History**

3.1 There has been no previous planning history for this site.

### **4.0 Policy Context**

#### National Guidance.

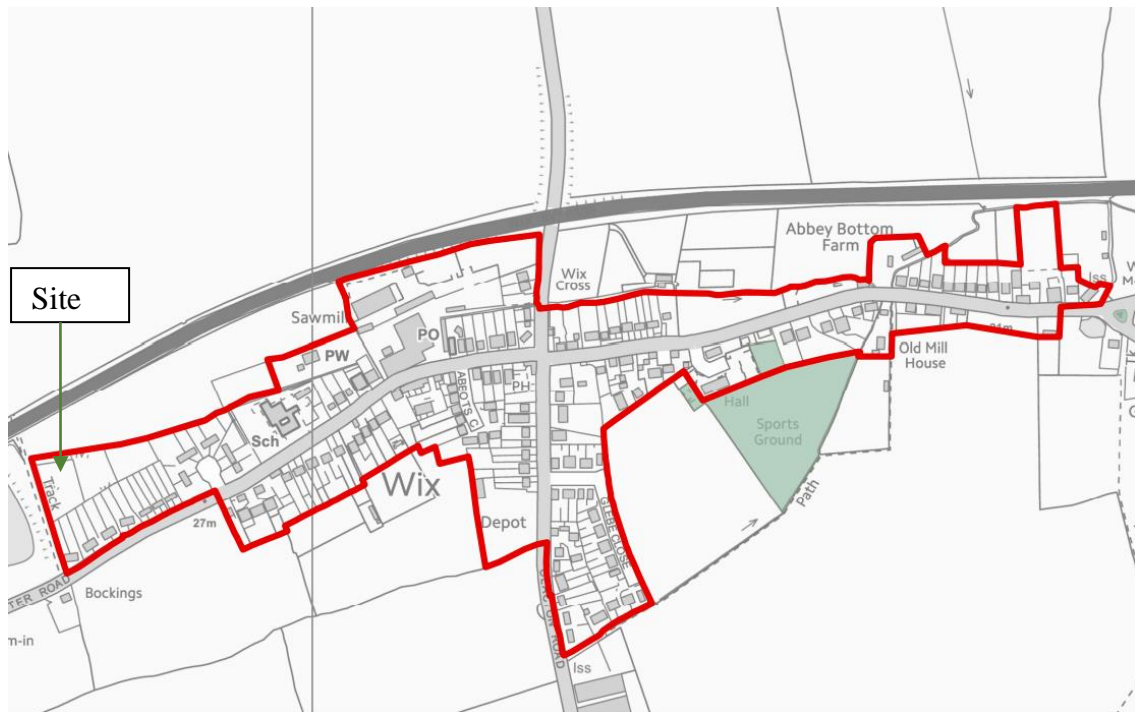
4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework advises that in determining planning applications for residential development, local planning authorities should take into account the Development Plan Policies and all other material considerations. Local planning authorities should follow the approach of the 'Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development' and that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay. It emphasises the need to plan positively for appropriate new development; so that both plan-making and development management are proactive and driven by a search for opportunities to deliver sustainable development, rather than a barrier.

4.2 The NPPF states that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where there are groups of smaller settlements and should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside, regardless of the 5-year housing supply. Further, it states that housing applications should be considered in the light of sustainable development. Paragraph 78 of the NPPF states that in order 'to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities'. Meanwhile paragraph 009 of the NPPG

considers that ‘a wide range of settlements can play a role in delivering sustainable development in rural areas.

Adopted Local Plan Policies

4.3 The application site is located within the defined development boundary of Wix as identified in the Policies Map of the Adopted Local Plan. The principle of residential development upon this site is therefore supported. The site has also been included upon the Council’s ‘Brownfield’ Register.



4.4 As this application is in outline form, with just the principle of 8 dwellings to be considered, the relevant Development Management policies have not been detailed at this stage, but will be referred to later.

**5.0 Proposed Development**

5.1 The site has been included within the Council’s Adopted Plan as being within the settlement boundary for Wix. The village has been identified as a ‘smaller rural settlement’ where some development is expected to take place. Although the village

does not have a full range of facilities, it does contain a primary school, village shop and post office together with a public house and reasonable public transport through services 102 & 104. It also has a number of local employment sites. It is therefore regarded as a sustainable settlement. The proposed site is within a very short walking distance from these facilities, with a surfaced and lit public footway along the entire northern side of Colchester Road from the entrance to the lane into the village centre.

- 5.2 Outline planning permission is sought for the development of 8 semi-detached dwellings. It is envisaged that these will be two bed units having regard to the apparent need for lower cost dwellings within the village and surrounding rural area. The format of the dwellings is shown upon the attached indicative site layout plan and follows the simple utilitarian design of Colchester Road and the Swedish Estate immediately to the south and east. The neighbouring dwellings were constructed post-war by the then rural authority as a solution to rural housing needs at the time. Over time, the majority of these properties are now in private ownership.
- 5.3 Access to the site is via the private lane from Colchester Road. This is clearly the only means of access available and would have been considered acceptable when the village development limits were extended within the adopted Plan. There are full rights of access along the lane for users of the application site. The lane also provides access to the neighbouring farm, a reservoir and allotment gardens. It is also used as a short-cut from Colchester Road on to the A120. Although the lane is single carriageway, it is relatively well used. Informal passing bays exist along the lane, but this scheme envisages improvements to provide a passing bay halfway between the site entrance and Colchester Road.
- 5.4 While this scheme includes access as a matter to be reserved for subsequent approval, the applicant is aware of the need to limit additional use onto the A120. This use clearly exists at present without any apparent restriction. However, this scheme suggests that by arranging for the access on to the lane to be set at an angle, together with the use of appropriately sited bollards, all vehicles entering or leaving the site can only be undertaken from Colchester Road. This arrangement would not prevent the existing established access rights for the farm owner, Anglian Water or users of the

allotment gardens, but will prevent occupants of the proposed development traversing the A120.

- 5.5 The indicative drawing shows a possible layout, with the dwellings grouped off an internal private drive. It also includes a turning facility in accordance with highway standards. Each dwelling would be provided with at least two car parking spaces. An externally located electric vehicle charging point will be provided to each dwelling. All private gardens would be at least 75m<sup>2</sup> to accord with the Council's requirements. The frontage onto the lane is enclosed with a hedgerow and a number of trees. A further couple of trees can be found along the northern boundary, alongside the access to the allotment gardens. These can all be retained or are outside the application site itself. There are no trees within the main portion of the site. A further landscaping scheme can strengthen the perimeter including along the northern and southern boundaries. Otherwise, the site is screened from the west by the extensive planting around the reservoir, to the east by a woodland between the site and the allotment gardens and to the north by roadside planting along the A120.
- 5.6 In this instance, the site is located within the designated settlement limit for the village as identified in the Plan, and in a location where there is reasonable access to public transport and thereby access to facilities such as shops, entertainment and employment. The land is currently amenity land. It is not subject to any designation nor is there any likely habitat in the immediate proximity suitable for any protected species. It would not cause the loss of any agricultural land. The proposal would therefore make more effective use of land that is of limited value to the area, which has no intrinsic quality nor provides any benefit to the community.
- 5.7 At the heart of The National Planning Policy Framework is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Local planning authorities should approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay while also encouraging the effective use of land, providing that it is not of high environmental value. In accordance with paragraph 8 of the NPPF, the scheme can be evaluated as follows:-

### Economic and Social Context

- 5.8 The scheme is considered to be in a sustainable location located just off the main Colchester Road. Within 500m of the entrance is a convenience store and Post Office, primary school, bus stops and Public House. The site is served by regular bus services in to Colchester, Manningtree and beyond. Wix is recognised as being a rural settlement and therefore considered by the Council to be a sustainable location for growth to support the vitality and vibrancy of the rural area.
- 5.9 The proposal would contribute economically to the area by supporting existing construction jobs and also increasing the population within the village to help sustain local services and amenities.

### Environmental Context

- 5.10 The site is currently surrounded by housing to the south, a reservoir to the west and a woodland and allotment gardens to the east. It is an enclosed site that has limited value to the surrounding area or the amenity of the settlement. It would be seen in the context of the surrounding housing and not as isolated dwellings in the countryside. The indicative layout demonstrates that the resulting buildings will be designed to reflect the character of the properties in the area so as to not detract from the local vernacular. The site is therefore considered to be a suitable location for development which will easily be assimilated within the context of Wix and not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside.
- 5.11 The site is therefore considered to be a sustainable location for growth as it performs extremely well against the three tests for sustainability as set out in paragraph 8 of the NPPF. Subject to appropriate design solution for the proposed dwellings, it is considered that the development can complement the immediate area. There will be no effect upon any neighbouring dwelling nor will the scheme result in increased danger to highway safety. The land is of no intrinsic value and the development will not cause harm to the character of the locality.



## 6.0 Conclusion

6.1 In summary, the development of eight dwellings will have no impact upon the rural setting of Wix. The site has been identified as being suitable for further housing within the adopted Local Plan. The scheme will provide for a modest development that will continue the form of housing in the context of that along Colchester Road. The National Planning Policy Framework advises that in determining a planning application for residential development, local planning authorities should follow the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' and encourage the effective use of land, providing that it is not of high environmental value and that development which is sustainable can be approved without delay. This site has been classified as a brownfield site. The proposal also needs to be considered against the three dimensions within the definition of 'sustainable development,' providing for an economic, social and environmental role. It is clear from the circumstances for this site the proposed development will accord with these three tests.