

TDC Update – Manningtree – December 2016

PLANS FOR 70 NEW HOMES IN MISTLEY GET THE GREEN LIGHT

(Information only) Plans for up to 70 new homes to be built on undeveloped land in Mistley have received the green light.

Tendring District Council's (TDC) Planning Committee approved the scheme for land north of Stourview Avenue after visiting the site.

At their meeting last Wednesday the outline application for Rose Builders was unanimously approved by Councillors who were persuaded having seen the location for themselves.

Other matters – such as the design and layout of the homes – will need to go back to the committee for final agreement in due course.

Historically, the site was Mistley Parish Council's preferred location for housing to be included in the new Local Plan.

However following approval for more than 450 properties at three other locations the parish council removed its support for the grassland site at the edge of the village.

TDC also received nine objections from local residents.

The application was submitted in November 2015 but determination was delayed while additional information was prepared to address European Habitat Regulations.

The ecological value of the site had to be assessed along with the cumulative impact of all the various developments in the Lawford, Manningtree and Mistley areas.

Highways issues were also of concern but Essex County Council has accepted the scheme provided certain conditions are put in place.

Gary Guiver, TDC's Planning Manager, said: "The main issue is whether any adverse impacts from the development outweigh the benefits. We feel, particularly following the ecological assessment, that approval is the correct recommendation."

The proposal was granted planning consent with six months given to come up with a legal agreement to cover developer contributions towards education facilities, health services, affordable housing and other contributions.

MOVES TOWARDS CREATING GARDEN COMMUNITY ON TENDRING AND COLCHESTER BORDER RECEIVE UNANIMOUS SUPPORT

Moves towards creating a ground-breaking garden-community on the borders of Tendring and Colchester have received unanimous support.

Tendring District Councillors fully backed the multi-million pound idea at a meeting of the Full Council 29th November and agreed in principle to be a long term funder for the project.

Members from all political parties threw their weight behind the initiative and it was hailed as one of the biggest decisions the Council has ever made.

Tendring District Council (TDC) Leader Neil Stock said that unanimous support for the scheme sent out a very clear message.

“It is so powerful that we have the whole Council behind this and we can now go forward and I hope that we can pull this off,” he said.

The project involves 7,000 to 9,000 homes as well as jobs, infrastructure and quality environments over a period of around 50 years.

The total cost of infrastructure alone is £329 million and the aim is to have much of this in place early in the programme.

Cllr Stock said: “This is massive, absolutely massive. It is massive in terms of size, in terms of homes, jobs and infrastructure and it is massive in terms of our aspirations.

“We need homes and I understand that no one wants large scale development near them. They worry about the lack of infrastructure and the effect it will have on their community.

“However, we absolutely want to get the infrastructure in place early on and I want the first building to go up to be a new school or new health centre – not a house.”

Cllr Stock added that there were risks to the project but said these could be managed.

He also announced that he wants to set up a working party of Tendring Councillors to meet regularly over the scheme – an idea which was welcomed.

“We will only go ahead if the business case stacks up,” he added. “I would not be prepared to invest £40 million if it doesn’t and we will probe and scrutinise. But if the deal is right we need to back this and make it work.

“As the first Council to reach this point we are taking the lead and we need to grasp this opportunity with both hands.”

On Friday TDC’s Cabinet endorsed the setting up of a company to oversee and drive forward the delivery of three possible planned communities in north Essex, including the one on the Tendring Colchester Border close to Essex University.

The company – North Essex Garden Communities Ltd – will be owned equally by TDC, Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council.

All four local authorities have been developing the proposals over the past year which could see three separate garden communities established.

The other two potential sites are on the boundaries of Colchester and Braintree at Marks Tey and on land to the West of Braintree on the Uttlesford District Council border.

Notes:

A similar procedure will be followed with reports being presented to Braintree District Council and Colchester Borough Council's Cabinets and Full Councils over the coming weeks. A report will also go before Essex County Council's Cabinet.

The three Local Delivery Vehicles are Tendring Colchester Borders Ltd; Colchester Braintree Borders Ltd and West of Braintree Ltd.

These all sit underneath North Essex Garden Communities Ltd.

READY FOR THE BIG ENERGY SWITCH IN TENDRING?

Residents and businesses in Tendring could save more than £300 a year on their energy bills if they take part in an Essex wide switching scheme which launches on the 6th December.

Instead of changing providers as an individual there is the chance to be part of a group and reap greater rewards.

Once again this year Essex County Council (ECC) working in partnership with Tendring District Council (TDC) has set up a collective energy switching scheme.

Residents will have from December 6, 2016 through to February 14, 2017 to register their interest in switching their gas or electricity supplier through the scheme – without any obligation to do so.

It is a completely free, easy, safe and secure way to cut energy bills without wasting valuable time hunting for the best offer.

Anyone who pays an energy bill can take part. So, as well as homeowners this includes tenants and customers on pre-payment meters.

Small and medium sized businesses will also be assisted through bespoke energy purchasing advice.

Paul Honeywood, TDC's Cabinet Member for Housing, said the Council wants to help residents and businesses keep their energy costs as low as possible.

"The Essex Energy Switch forms a key part of doing this which is why we are supporting it," he said. "It is appreciated that paying less for energy will not necessarily result in a warmer or healthier home but there will also be the offer of advice on how to insulate your home and consume less energy.

"Anything to encourage people to review their energy suppliers is a bonus."

The auction takes place on February 14, 2017 and works by getting energy companies to bid against each other to offer the lowest rate for gas and electricity.

Then those taking part will receive an e-mail containing a new gas and electricity offer - valid for one month. The offer has been calculated using your individual existing energy usage and costs and only when the offer is received do you need to decide whether or not to accept.

Tendring had around 360 residents register an interest in the scheme that ran in February, of which 187 residents choose to switch to the tariff offered.

Tendring's switching rate of those having registered was 54 per cent against the national average of 11 per cent. **The average savings by those that switched was £328.29.**

It is estimated that over 49 per cent of those registering will not have considered changing tariff or supplier in over three years.

To find out more and register for the Essex Energy Switch go to www.essex.gov.uk/energyswitch

Residents who rely on oil for heating can also make potential savings through a local collective oil buying scheme. More details can be found at https://www.essexrcc.org.uk/oilbuying_scheme.aspx

TENDRING'S FREE PARKING SCHEME LOOKS CONFIRMED FOR NEXT YEAR

A popular free parking scheme for residents in Tendring is set to continue again next year.

It had previously been announced that it was hoped to carry on with a modified scheme, which was first introduced in April, for another three years depending on finances being available.

Tom Howard, Tendring District Council's (TDC) Cabinet Member for Finance, Benefits and Revenues, said that was now looking very likely – subject to final approval.

“The financial performance of parking to date - £113,000 ahead of budget - enables us to confirm the continuation of the scheme into 2017/18 as originally proposed last year,” he told the Council's Cabinet on Friday.

“The associated administrative arrangements can now be put in place subject to final budget proposals that will be presented to Members over the coming weeks.”

The initiative is aimed at supporting residents and businesses and has been a success.

Under a previous scheme permits were sent out to all Council tax paying households across the District which allowed free parking in all but two of the Council's car parks after 11am each day.

Under the modified arrangements this is covered by an opt-in procedure with virtual electronic permits; the permits exclude July and August; additional permits can be bought and there are special priced offers for the two excluded months.

TDC offers free parking to all at its sites after 6pm.

Permits for 2017/18 will be available earlier than last year to try to prevent the logjam of applications experienced last time due to the popularity of the scheme.

It is anticipated that it will be possible to register for next year's permit from the first week in January. Those with a registered email address or mobile phone will be contacted as soon as possible to register.

WORKING PARTIES DEMONSTRATE SIZE OF FINANCIAL CHALLENGE AHEAD

Four new working parties set up to tackle a three year budget gap of £4.765 million in Tendring have demonstrated the sheer size of the challenge ahead.

That was the message from Tom Howard, Tendring District Council's Cabinet Member for Finance, Revenues and Benefits.

Speaking at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet on Friday Cllr Howard thanked all those who had taken part in the exercise and the work put in by officers.

So far on-going revenue savings of £268,000 have been identified for 2017/18 and £528,000 for 2018/19.

"The working party that I was invited to clearly demonstrated to me the magnitude of the challenge we are facing," he said.

"Little can be more depressing than to work through the scenarios only to find that a service reduction far greater than you would ever wish to contemplate would only result in a modest and wholly insufficient saving!"

He described TDC as a "lean and efficient" Council but due to the Government cuts in grant and cost pressures from the increased minimum wage it would make it difficult to balance the books.

While Cllr Howard was not criticising the increase in minimum wage or pensions, which are good for workers, he highlighted the fact that the higher oncosts impact on contract costs to the Council for services.

"Savings options are becoming increasingly difficult to identify whilst trying to protect service provision, and we can all agree that these are decisions that we would rather not have to take," he added.

“Unfortunately, the need to find around £5million in savings over the next three years is not an option. The savings identified so far are significantly below the level required and it appears likely that we will need to call some money down from reserves to balance the budget but this is not a long term solution.”

“We all have an opportunity to have a voice in this process and to really challenge what services TDC will provide in future,” he added. “This will of course be balanced against what our residents, businesses and visitors expect from us.”

TDC has already made savings which have reduced the Council’s annual spend by £12 million each and every year.

WORK CONTINUES ON PROPOSED NEW WARD BOUNDARIES IN TENDRING

Work is continuing to come up with proposals for new ward boundaries across Tendring which will see the number of Councillors reduced from 60 to 48.

Tendring District Council (TDC) has until January 9 to meet a deadline for a response to the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) for England.

The commission has already informed TDC that it is looking to recommend the number of Councillors to be cut by 12 - and the Council is keen to come up with its own suggestions for what the ward boundary map should look like.

At Tuesday 29th November meeting of the Full Council it was decided that TDC Chief Executive Ian Davidson should put forward a provisional submission in time to hit the deadline.

It will be agreed by the Council’s Electoral Review Working Group, and a formal submission will then be determined by the Council at its meeting on January 24.

TDC Leader Neil Stock said: **“We now know that at the next election in May 2019 there will be 48 seats contested and we now have to decide what we want the wards to look like.**

“We can either let the LGBC come up with the map or we can be involved. It is a very tight timetable.”

The LGBC is consulting with the Council, interested parties as well as members of the public.

Paul Honeywood, TDC’s Cabinet Member for Housing who chairs Electoral Review Working Party, warned that the clock is ticking.

“Everyone on the working group has had their say and all Councillors can put their own views forward,” he added. “If we fail to deliver our proposal on time we will have the ward boundaries decided for us and we may not like what we get.”

He said that one Member wards will be cleaner and more accountable.

For further information on the review and for guidance on how to submit views to the Boundary Commission go to www.consultation.lgbce.org.uk and www.lgbce.org.uk

CALLS MADE FOR SPEED CAMERAS AND NO OVERTAKING RESTRICTIONS ON A133

Calls have been made for speed cameras and no overtaking restrictions to be introduced on the A133 Weeley to Clacton bypass.

Essex County Council recently completed a review due to the number of road deaths over the past year and requests for investigations by Tendring District Councillors as well as MPs Bernard Jenkin and Douglas Carswell.

ECC – as the highways authority - has now published a draft report which proposes a number of changes.

It is recommending that an experimental speed limit of 50mph is introduced for 12 months along the 5.7kms stretch between Weeley Roundabout and St Johns Road Roundabout, as well as improved signage and lining.

While the moves were welcomed by Tendring District Councillors at a meeting of the Full Council on 29th November they want to see extra measures brought in.

Carlo Guglielmi, TDC's Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety, said that a lower speed limit would not succeed on its own.

“The report we have received is very straight forward and it puts the accidents down to driver error,” he said.

“The A133 was badly built in the first place and it should have been dual carriageway. We now have to deal with the consequences of that.

“A 50mph speed limit is an improvement but it will mean nothing if there are no average speed camera checks – the speed limit is of no use without it being enforced.”

Cllr Guglielmi pointed to the similar improvements that were made on the A120 after years of campaigning and had led to a reduction in the number of accidents on the road.

It was also suggested that while calling for speed cameras TDC should ask for no overtaking restrictions to be installed along the stretch between Weeley and Clacton.

ECC's review revealed that a total of 60 collisions were recorded along the 5.7kms over a ten year period.

Some 27 per cent (18) involved overtaking or crossover onto the opposite carriageway.

There were six fatal collisions in the 13 month period from May 12, 2015 through to June 12, 2016.

Alan Coley & Carlo Guglielmi