



Open Meeting Future Options Findings

Wednesday 19th February 2014 7.00 p.m. John Lampon Hall

Meeting Arrangements

There were approximately 10 people at the future options table representing not just residential aspects of the village but also business interests. It is estimated that the age ranged upwards from 30 years.

This balance of age and interests provided lively debate and all but two were actively engaged in the discussions on each topic raised.

Discussion Points - Outcomes and Observations

The following headlines the points raised.

1 Remain as a village - without exception all want West Bergholt to remain as a village with its own identity separated from the Colchester urban sprawl and also from the nearby villages of Eight Ash Green and Great Horkesley.

2 Maintain a village centre. - It was noted the village centre was considered to be that enclosed by the three roads Colchester Road, Chapel Road and Lexden Road however this area was largely full in terms of any future development. There are however three open spaces within the triangle - around Heathlands School, the Lorkin Daniell playing field and the allotments. Each open space added to the general wellbeing within the village and used for different recreational pursuits.

3 Development by Infill - Generally the group believed that infill development should be by exception only and determined on a case by case basis. The village character may suffer if infilling continues in the future as has been the case in the past. The inference from this is that future development should concentrate on new sites but insufficient time was available to discuss potential development sites.

4 All wanted to see the infrastructure requirements eg utility services, school / playschool and roads were capable of supporting future village expansion whether for residential or business use.

5 Social or Affordable Housing - This discussion formed part of the wider debate on future development in residential terms. There were some concerns that future development should comprise of housing to allow young families to remain in the village. Cost and limited availability is seen as a barrier to this at present. The size of this problem is not known although it was suspected this might be high. Housing needs survey would be helpful to scale this concern.

6 Downsizing capability - This can be linked to 5 above in that large family homes are occupied by one or two adults. Whilst there might be different reasons for this it is considered there is a shortage of suitable homes (or micro community developments) for older residents who wish to remain in the village and possibly release some capital in their homes.

7 Consolidation of recreation facilities - Initially the view was that sufficient open space was already available within the village however the question was raised as to whether this would meet the needs of a growing village over the next 20 plus years. Very quickly the views expressed by some at the start of this topic debate changed when they became aware of the constraints and restrictions on the existing facilities. All appeared in agreement that a future use and expansion of the existing facilities was unlikely unless new recreational / open space areas can be found to allow consolidation of recreational and sport facilities.

Two aspects came out of the debate. A well reasoned case must be developed in the Neighbourhood Plan explaining the existing facilities and use, the restrictions that exist for these facilities to meet future village needs and the type and size of land required to meet the consolidation plans. The case should also detail what changes would be envisaged for the existing open spaces following any consolidation to a new site. No opinion was recorded as to whether the existing open space should be used for future housing and it is suggested this needs to be an aspect determined when the NP is written.

8 Cycle Schemes - Concerns were raised on the lack of formal cycle schemes both in the village and between the village and Colchester and other nearby villages. Cycling should be encouraged in our future plans and linked to item 7 above as well as general village well-being.

9 Business Needs - Initially the majority on the table had not considered the impact of the three existing business areas within the village - Armoury Road, Nayland Road and Bourne Road. Shops and farming needs were not discussed specifically but naturally fall into the business consideration area. This can be considered as an example of how seamlessly the business areas are successfully integrated within village life. Expansion of some business areas was felt generally acceptable and particularly in Nayland Road and Armoury Road where expansion space is available and the roads and utility services could meet additional demand. The road leading to the small business development towards the end of Bourne Road was considered inadequate making this site unacceptable for business expansion in its current form.

General business development expansion should provide mixed business needs ideally of a small or start up business nature. The growth should be planned to ensure any expansion remains village friendly and allows the opportunity to adequately regulate the business areas in terms of operating hours and type of permissible business activities, which currently is not the case.