

# Chigwell Parish Council

## Planning Committee – 26 March 2026

### Officer Report

**Application Reference:** EPF/2501/24

**Site:** Guru Gobind Singh Khalsa College, Roding Lane, Chigwell, Essex IG7 6BQ

**Proposal:** Proposed new special educational needs and disabilities school including playing fields alongside a landscape-led enabling residential development including conversion of the existing college building to residential, partial demolition of existing outbuildings, provision of flexible Class F2 floorspace and associated works.

#### Purpose of report

This report is submitted to assist Members in considering the re-consultation on application EPF/2501/24 following the submission of revised plans and supporting documents.

The revised scheme is acknowledged to be an improvement on the original proposal in a number of respects. The residential element has reduced to 209 dwellings, 27 affordable homes are now proposed, and further revisions have been made to the school, landscape and sports elements. Those changes should be recognised.

However, the amended submission does not overcome the principal planning objections. The proposal remains substantial unallocated development in the Metropolitan Green Belt, in an isolated and car-dependent location, with continuing conflict with parking policy and continuing concerns regarding residential quality.

#### Summary of officer view

The recommendation remains that Chigwell Parish Council should maintain and strengthen its objection.

The strongest reasons are these. The site is not allocated in the Local Plan. It remains within the Metropolitan Green Belt. EFDC's policy comments state that it is not Grey Belt land and that the parcel makes a strong contribution to preventing neighbouring towns from merging. The proposal would therefore remain inappropriate development in Green Belt terms and would reduce the gap between settlements.

In addition, the site remains a poor location for a housing-led development of this scale. EFDC's urban design comments continue to state that the site is isolated from other residential development and that the private car is likely to remain the primary transport mode for most journeys.

The parking objection should now be stated more firmly than in earlier drafts. On the material available, the parking strategy is not simply modest or ambitious. It is materially below the minimum parking requirement that applies to a site with moderate connectivity and is therefore in clear tension with Policy T1.

#### Principle of development

The site is not allocated for this form of development in the Local Plan. That remains a fundamental point.

This is not a site identified through the development plan as suitable for large-scale housing growth. The proposal therefore seeks to introduce a substantial amount of residential development on an unallocated site where policy restraint applies and where the Green Belt designation remains a primary policy consideration.

EFDC's policy response is clear that the site does not qualify as Grey Belt land. It also confirms that the wider parcel makes a strong contribution to preventing neighbouring towns from merging and that a reduction in the gap would compromise that separation physically and visually. The policy response further concludes that the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt and that substantial weight must be given to the resulting harm to openness.

That remains the starting point for Members. The revisions do not alter the fact that this is substantial enabling residential development in the Green Belt on an unallocated site.

### **Green Belt harm and settlement separation**

The objection on Green Belt grounds remains strong and should continue to be a principal reason for objection.

The issue is not confined to the footprint of buildings alone. The policy harm arises from the cumulative effect of buildings, roads, parking areas, domestic curtilages, fencing, lighting, hardstanding and general residential activity. EFDC's policy comments expressly refer to the likelihood of substantial additional harm to visual openness and to the increase in residential paraphernalia and domestic activity.

The Council is therefore entitled to maintain the position that the proposal would erode openness and weaken the function of this land in maintaining separation between settlements. The revised landscaping and reduced dwelling number may lessen the degree of harm, but they do not remove it.

### **Sustainability of the location**

A further principal objection remains the suitability of the site for a development of this scale.

EFDC's urban design comments continue to state that the site is isolated from other residential development and that movement and connectivity by modes other than the private car are inherently limited. The same response states that private car use is likely to remain the primary mode for most journeys.

That is important because it directly affects how the parking strategy should be judged. A restrained parking approach may be arguable in a town-centre or station-adjacent location with excellent accessibility and realistic alternatives to the private car. This site is not such a location. The sustainability weakness of the site means that the parking provision must be tested against realistic likely car ownership and car use, not against aspiration alone.

## **6. Parking quantum, design and Policy T1**

The Essex Parking Guidance 2024 applies a zonal approach to residential parking standards based on connectivity level. On the basis that this site falls within the moderate connectivity category, the

applicable residential minimum is 1 space plus 0.25 visitor space for each one-bedroom dwelling, and 2 spaces plus 0.25 visitor space for each dwelling with two to four bedrooms. The same guidance also makes clear that parking below minimum standards should only be considered where a developer can demonstrate that trips to and from the site will be by modes other than car and that there will be less parking demand than the minimum standard assumes.

That standard is not met here.

The submitted accommodation schedule shows a total of 209 dwellings, comprising 52 one-bedroom units and 157 two- to four-bedroom units. Applying the moderate-connectivity standards to that mix gives a minimum requirement of approximately 419 car parking spaces including visitor parking. That figure is reached by a straightforward application of the guidance to the submitted dwelling mix.

Against that, the revised parking schedule provides only 162 residential allocated or garage spaces, 2 car club bays and 5 visitor spaces. Even if the two car club bays are counted in the broadest possible way, the scheme still provides only 169 spaces against a minimum requirement of about 419, leaving a shortfall of roughly 250 spaces. That is not a small deviation or a matter of planning judgment at the margins. It is a substantial under provision.

The detail of the schedule makes the conflict even clearer. The parking schedule states that one-bedroom apartment dwellings have no allocated parking space at all. Yet on a moderate-connectivity basis the minimum expectation is one space per one-bedroom dwelling plus visitor parking. The same schedule states that two- and three-bedroom apartment dwellings have only one allocated parking space each, whereas the moderate-connectivity minimum is two spaces per dwelling plus visitor parking. On any fair reading, the proposal is materially non-compliant with the Essex Parking Guidance 2024 and therefore fails to comply with policy T1 of the Local Plan.

It is also not enough for the applicant to point to car club provision, a shuttle bus concept or wider sustainable travel aspirations. The Essex Parking Guidance 2024 allows reduced parking only where there is convincing evidence that actual demand will be lower and that non-car travel will genuinely replace car use. That case is particularly weak here because EFDC's own urban design officer has already concluded that the site is inherently limited in non-car connectivity and likely to remain primarily car-based.

Nor is the issue limited to numbers alone. The design quality of the parking provision remains in question. EFDC's urban design comments ask for tracking in the River Roding House podium and record that integrated garages, other than Type H, appear narrower than the minimum 3.4 metres required by the Essex Parking standards. If garages do not meet the minimum standard, there is a further question as to whether all of the nominal spaces shown can properly be relied upon as compliant and usable parking spaces at all.

For those reasons, the parking objection should be expressed firmly. The current proposal does not simply offer a low-parking approach. It materially fails to comply with the Essex Parking Guidance 2024 for a moderate-connectivity site and therefore fails to demonstrate compliance with Policy T1 in respect of both the amount of parking and, on current evidence, aspects of its design and usability.

## **Residential quality**

The latest urban design comments also remain important.

Although the overall site layout has improved, EFDC's urban design response continues to state that the internal layouts have not progressed sufficiently to address concerns over dwelling quality, that there is concern density has been prioritised over livability, and that further changes are required including removal or amendment of certain one-bed one-person units, internal habitable rooms without windows and north-facing single-aspect dwellings.

The Parish Council can therefore continue to object on the basis that the proposal still lacks sufficient confidence that all dwellings would provide an acceptable living environment.

## **Benefits of the scheme**

The report should acknowledge the scheme's positive elements fairly.

The introduction of 27 affordable homes is a significant improvement on the original submission, and the case for SEND provision now appears materially stronger than at the earlier stage of consultation. Those are real benefits.

However, those benefits do not remove the fundamental objections in principle. They do not change the fact that the site is unallocated, remains in the Green Belt, remains isolated, and is now accompanied by a parking strategy that appears plainly non-compliant with the current Essex guidance and therefore contrary to Policy T1.

## **Conclusion**

The revised scheme is better than the original proposal, but it remains unacceptable in planning terms.

The proposal would still amount to substantial unallocated development in the Metropolitan Green Belt. It would still harm openness and weaken settlement separation. It would still place a significant residential development in an isolated and car-dependent location. Most importantly, the residential parking provision now appears to fall materially and substantially below the minimum standard applicable to a moderate-connectivity site under the Essex Parking Guidance 2024, with a shortfall of about 250 spaces and a clear mismatch between the standard and the allocation proposed for one-, two- and three-bedroom dwellings. That is a serious conflict, not a minor shortfall.

Accordingly, the revisions do not overcome the grounds for objection.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Chigwell Parish Council maintain and strengthen its objection to application EPF/2501/24.

## **Draft resolution**

**That Chigwell Parish Council, having considered the revised plans and supporting documents submitted in relation to application EPF/2501/24, resolves to maintain and strengthen its objection to the proposal.**

The Parish Council acknowledges that the revised submission includes some improvements, including a reduction in dwelling numbers, the introduction of 27 affordable homes and a stronger case in support of the proposed SEND school.

However, the Parish Council considers that those changes do not overcome the fundamental planning objections to the proposal.

The Council objects because the site is not allocated for this form of development in the Local Plan and remains within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The Council considers that the proposal would amount to substantial and inappropriate development in the Green Belt, would harm openness, and would undermine the important gap between settlements.

The Council further objects because the site is an isolated and unsustainable location for a residential development of this scale and is likely to remain heavily dependent on the private car.

The Council also objects in the strongest terms to the proposed parking provision. The site is treated as a moderate-connectivity location under the Essex Parking Guidance 2024. On that basis, the development should provide one parking space plus visitor parking for each one-bedroom dwelling and two parking spaces plus visitor parking for each two-, three- and four-bedroom dwelling. Applied to the submitted dwelling mix, that equates to a minimum requirement of about 419 spaces including visitor provision. The scheme provides only 162 residential allocated or garage spaces, 5 visitor spaces and 2 car club bays, leaving a shortfall of about 250 spaces. The Council notes in particular that one-bedroom apartments are proposed with no allocated parking and that two- and three-bedroom apartments are proposed with only one allocated space each. The Council therefore considers the proposal to be materially non-compliant with the Essex Parking Guidance 2024 and contrary to Policy T1. The Council is also concerned that aspects of the parking design remain unresolved, including podium tracking and substandard garage widths.

The Council additionally remains concerned that the proposal has not satisfactorily resolved issues relating to the quality and liveability of parts of the residential accommodation.

For all of those reasons, Chigwell Parish Council objects to the application and requests that Epping Forest District Council refuse planning permission.

In the event that Epping Forest District Council is nevertheless minded to approve the application, Chigwell Parish Council requests that its objections be reported in full to the determining committee and that a Parish Council representative be permitted to address that committee.