

Objection to PA 261376 form Boxted Parish Council

Introduction

Boxted Parish Council (BPC) strongly objects to planning application 261376. The proposal for 150 dwellings in a rural village of approximately 600 properties is disproportionate to the scale, character and infrastructure capacity of Boxted and its immediate surroundings. BPC consider this application to be speculative, seeking outline permission on a site that was nominated in Colchester's emerging local plan, which has, notably, not yet been ratified. Although now proceeding to Reg 19 Consultation following the CCC decision on 26th August 2026, previously Members of the Colchester planning committee raised objection to the draft local plan, quite rightly in our opinion, citing concerns over lack of infrastructure to support the location and scale of many of the sites that were nominated. The local plan was therefore put on hold until such a time as further studies could be published and information gathered regarding the suitability of the nominated sites. Boxted was one of those sites of specific concern along with the neighbouring parish of Langham. By submitting this outline application, the proposed developer is making a speculative gesture that they believe the emerging local plan is a done deal, or worse yet, that they believe the existent local plan and existent Boxted Neighbourhood plan are not relevant. This seemingly contemptuous move, timed most unfortunately during a period when most residents are on holiday and when the Parish Council is on summer recess, undermines public trust in the planning process. In such a sensitive area, directly adjacent to the Dedham Vale National Landscape (DVNL) an "outline planning application" is not at all a suitable means to begin the development of such a site. Full details should be brought forward immediately about the development, not simply brushed under the rug of "matters reserved" for some future, un-consulted decision. In such a situation where CCC are deciding on a site that they have already nominated, the utmost transparency is required, as ultimately, they are an interested party in their very own decision making.

BPC has previously made two representations to Colchester City Council (CCC) planning which we feel have been ignored. First, we outrightly disputed the designation of Boxted as a "sustainable site for development" prior to the call for sites, and BPC clearly stated in that representation the many reasons we believe Boxted is not currently sustainable for development. We reiterate those points again in this objection. Secondly, we have voiced our dismay and concern that CCC recently determined that an Environmental Impact Assessment would not be required for this development. We reiterate again in this objection the many reasons why this site, with its proximity to and views over, of and from within the DVNL absolutely demand the highest levels of impact assessment at all stages. With the emerging local plan still not decided or ratified, then this pre-emptive and speculative application must be measured and determined by the existing policies of the existent Local Plan and

existent Boxted Neighbourhood plan without prejudice by or reference to the emerging plan. This objection details how this application contravenes many of these policies.

This application is for outline planning all matters reserved except for access. Therefore, it is important that particular attention is given to the proposed access arrangements (see point 3).

The remainder of this objection documents reasons that this proposal should be refused.

1. Conflict with the adopted Colchester Local Plan (Section 2)

“Boxted

- Boxted Cross is suitable for limited growth only;
- The Dedham Vale AONB (now National Landscape) abuts the settlement to the north-east and constrains development in that direction;
- Arable land and orchards constrain growth to the north-west and west;
- A local wildlife site constrains growth to the east; and
- Development southwards is constrained to avoid ribbon development along Boxted Straight Road leading to the coalescence of settlements and to discourage additional housing away from existing services. “

Policy SS2 further states that all development in Boxted must comply with the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan, alongside relevant Local Plan policies. This application conflicts with the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan, which expressly seeks to prevent settlement coalescence under Policies LC1 and LC2. It would also circumvent Policy SB1, which establishes a clear expectation that housing outside, but contiguous with, the settlement boundary should normally be limited to rural exception affordable housing.

The application site lies within an area where both the Local Plan and the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan indicate that development should not take place.

Colchester already allocates sufficient land—14,720 homes—to meet the city’s objectively assessed needs to 2033, without requiring additional general market housing in the open countryside. Residential development in this location is not necessary to deliver the social dimension of sustainable development and is likely to be functionally isolated and car dependent.

2. Conflict with Other villages and countryside policies (OV1 and OV2)

- Policy OV1 supports only small-scale, appropriate infill and previously developed land in “Other Villages”. Boxted is not an ‘Other Village’ - it is classed as countryside.
- Policy OV2 strictly limits residential development in the countryside to rural exception affordable housing and special cases (e.g. rural workers’ housing).

Allocating a new greenfield site beyond the existing settlement boundary for general market housing is therefore directly at odds with Colchester City Council’s strategic approach.

3. Access

This application proposes vehicle access to the site less than 50m from the significant bend in Straight Road towards Boxted Cross and the width of the Straight Road carriageway at this point is 5m. 5m is deemed the minimum carriageway width for a residential street but Straight Rd is a two-way road carrying more traffic and therefore the standard should be 6.0-6.75m. 150 houses in a location poorly serviced by facilities and public transport will reasonably generate circa 1000 additional vehicle journeys per day accessing a road with less than safe carriageway width and close proximity to a blind bend. This gives rise to our concerns that there will be insufficient visibility for vehicles leaving the site and also for vehicles coming from Boxted Cross around the bend to find vehicles exiting the development on a carriageway that often requires vehicles to straddle the centre line at this point. Larger vehicles will require a presence on both sides of the carriageway and more when making the turn into or out of the development. Boxted is a rural location with farm traffic on many roads.



Figure 1

Position of pedestrian ingress/egress to site at School sign looking towards Boxted Cross. Note hedging/tree line

The pedestrian access to the site is at a different point which is closer to Boxted Cross at the edge of the proposed site. This point is approx 55m from the bend away from Boxted Cross towards Colchester. There is no pavement in front of the adjacent Hill Farm development which has tree and hedging to the land boundary with the road (see

Fig 1). Exiting the site by foot will have limited same side road visibility towards Boxted Cross.

What is concerningly dangerous, is the requirement to cross the road at this point to access a safe walking route and the walking route to the local primary school, less than 300m from the site, will require 3 road crossings including those at the perilous Boxted Cross (see Figure 2)

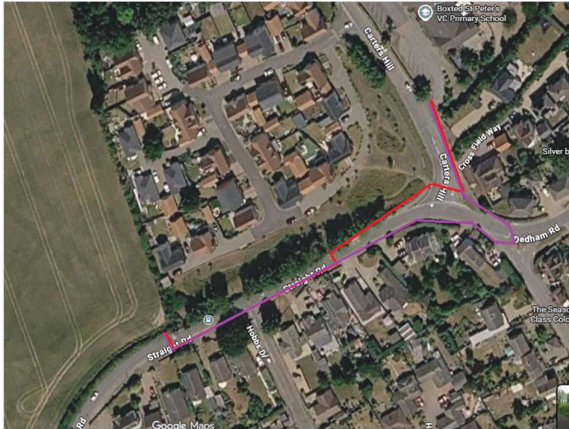


Figure 2 Two walking routes to the school

In summary, the site has poor and dangerous access options and therefore not a suitable location for a development of this scale. This application requires access arrangement to be passed at this outline stage and therefore should be sent back until improved.

4. Countryside character and agricultural land

From CCC extant Local Plan

- Recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and
- Take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, preferring lower-quality land where significant development of agricultural land is unavoidable.

The site is mainly Grade 2 agricultural land and a small amount of Grade 3a (Source Page 142 of Bellway report/submission Phase 1 Contamination Report – page 67/68 of 81598171).

Grade 2 is generally designated Best and Most Versatile (BMV) (NPPF) and National policy recognises the economic and wider environmental benefits of such land and seeks to safeguard it from unnecessary development. The applicant should be required to demonstrate that the development cannot be accommodated on previously developed land (brownfield) or on agricultural land of a lower classification, they should

also demonstrate that the benefits of the proposal outweigh the loss of this nationally important resource.

Developing this site would involve excavating, compacting, removing, and mixing topsoil, which the Government recognises as a natural-capital asset that supports carbon storage, water management, and biodiversity.

This site contributes to the rural setting and separation between Boxted and Colchester which continues to be protected in the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan and Colchester Local Plan.

5. Sustainable transport and location of development

Boxted Cross is acknowledged by Colchester City Council as having limited public transport, basic facilities and likely heavy reliance on the private car for access to employment, higher-order services and most shopping.

A new allocation along Boxted Straight Road would:

- Result in additional car-based commuting along a rural road already subject to speed and safety issues, and
- Offer no realistic prospect of delivering high-quality public transport or walkable access to a broader range of facilities.
- Increase pressure on local highways infrastructure. The only viable routes to the site are Straight Road and Dedham Road. Other roads in Boxted are narrow and unsuitable for regular additional traffic. The quickest access to the A12 is via Langham, using mainly single-track lanes, while access to the A134 via Great Horkesley also relies on narrow lanes.

6. Boxted Neighbourhood Plan Housing Needs Survey (2025)

Boxted Parish Council commissioned the Rural Community Council of Essex to undertake a housing needs survey. The survey concluded that Boxted required development of up to 10 homes, comprising six affordable homes, one shared-ownership home, one open-market bungalow and two self-build plots. No additional requirement was identified.

- This indicates that a development of this scale would be inherently unsustainable.
- A proposal for 150 dwellings on a 6.1-hectare greenfield site represents a step change in growth that is disproportionate to Boxted's scale and locally evidenced need. By the Parish Council's estimates, this quantum of development would represent a substantial percentage increase in the existing dwelling stock of Boxted Cross and the wider parish, with associated impacts on character,

settlement coalescence and car dependency, given the limited services and public transport available.

A more proportionate approach would be to meet locally evidenced needs through small, well-related sites (and/or rural exception provision where appropriate) brought forward through the Neighbourhood Plan review and/or other sustainable allocations higher in the settlement hierarchy—avoiding the loss of open agricultural land in the Boxted–Colchester gap and avoiding increased coalescence effects.

7. Further concerns regarding sustainability

- The local primary school is presently at capacity, with 206 pupils against 210 places. As a result, additional school provision is likely to be outside the parish, requiring car travel.
- There is no secondary school provision locally so most 11-18 provision will require car use to the feeder prescribed school of The Gilberd, Colchester.
- The bus service at Boxted Cross is very limited, being served by the 80 and 80A routes. There is no service into Colchester before 9:00am and no return service from Colchester after 3:35pm, meaning employment and education cannot realistically be served by public transport.
- There are no shops, GP surgery, dentist, post office or cashpoint in the village.
- There is minimal employment in the village.

In summary, travel for most services would, in practice, require a car, taxi or bicycle journey. There is no safe cycling route. No services are available within 1km via a footpath.

8. Natural environment, biodiversity and green infrastructure

The Council’s own site assessment states:

- The site is greenfield farmland with hedgerows;
- It supports skylark and other farmland birds, which are nationally declining;
- There is a priority habitat woodland directly to the north; and
- There are no opportunities to enhance or create green infrastructure on the site. These points strongly imply that:
 - The land is part of a functioning farmland bird landscape (skylark is a priority species), and loss of this habitat is not environmentally neutral; and
 - If the Council’s own assessment concludes there are “no opportunities” to enhance or create green infrastructure, the site is a poor candidate for delivering the mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) and green infrastructure enhancements expected under both the NPPF and the Environment Act regime.

Here, housing would replace habitat that currently contributes to the open rural gap and farmland bird assemblage.

The additional car journeys likely to be generated by this site, estimated at 750 to 1,000 daily vehicle movements, would create carbon emissions that the site itself could not offset.

The potential impact on biodiversity and ecology requires proper assessment. The applicant has secured permission to avoid producing an environmental impact assessment. Given the rural location, Grade 3 agricultural land and proximity of less than 500 metres to the Dedham Vale National Landscape, an environmental impact assessment should be required before any planning application is considered.

9. Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty/National Landscape

The BNP notes that part of Boxted parish lies within the Dedham Vale AONB and that the area is therefore subject to the AONB Management Plan and associated Local Plan policies.

While this site lies outside the AONB boundary, the NPPF gives great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, including in their setting, and requires development within the setting to be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts.

This site along Boxted Straight Road in the direction of Colchester:

- Risks visually linking Boxted and the Dedham Vale NL more strongly to the urban edge; and
- Erodes the perception of a distinct rural parish abutting the AONB, thereby undermining the area's special qualities as experienced from local roads and public rights of way.

The site is less than 500 metres from the Dedham Vale National Landscape and is visible across the natural valley. The site would have views of, and be visible from, the National Landscape.

The application would be detrimental to the setting of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty / National Landscape, which is protected by Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Boxted is part of the Dedham Vale Dark Skies Project, as part of the Dedham Vale Society, which is seeking Dark Sky Reserve status for the Dedham Vale AONB. It has already achieved Dark Skies status for Thorrington Street (3km from this site). Light pollution, like air, water and land pollution, has adverse environmental and health

impacts. It reduces visibility of the night sky, harms wildlife, wastes energy and undermines the dark-sky objectives being pursued locally. Once permitted, these impacts would be difficult to reverse. Suitable lighting provision must meet standards to satisfy the dark skies campaign and so such matters absolutely need to be proposed as part of a full planning application and not lost in the reserved matters of an outline application.

10. Impact on infrastructure

- 10.1 The sewage system provided by Anglian Water is already at capacity (evidenced in AECOM's Water Cycle Study for Colchester), with several Environment Agency examples of capacity being exceeded, resulting in sewage flooding on roads and residential properties and wastewater bypassing the treatment facility. September 2025 testing of the Black Brook showed nitrate levels of 5-10 mg/L and phosphate of .2-.5 mg/L which Langham Parish Council have suggested to Colchester City Council evidences existing sewage pollution. This is backed up the Environment Agency spot inspection in December 2023 which found that during hydraulic overload **untreated sewage was overflowing in the Black Brook** which ultimately feeds into the River Stour and the Stour/Orwell protected estuaries system. Anglian Water has no planned investment at the Langham WRC up to 2050 (Anglian water Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan). Back in 2017 Colchester Council issued a joint statement with Langham Parish Council and the Environment Agency recommending development be phased alongside improvements to the wastewater infrastructure which have not happened. Development that puts added requirement on the Langham WRC could/will affect the Stour and Orwell Estuaries Special Protection Area. It is not just an argument that 150 additional homes might/could overload the existing system but that the existing system is already overloaded and this application should not be allowed on that basis. It would not be acceptable to allow this site permission to develop with a planning condition requiring capacity at Langham WRC as this is not effective or deliverable with no funding plans to achieve this until beyond 2050.
- 10.2 Adding to the evidence that the site is not a sustainable location, Boxted, as a rural location, is served by very poor mobile phone coverage.
- 10.3 The local St Peters, Boxted Primary school has 206 pupils (25-26) and just 4 vacancies. This development by ECC standard pupil-yield calculation will generate a need for an additional 40 – 45 primary school places. This cannot be accommodated at St Peters alone and there are no ECC expansion projects identified in the next 10 years in the local planning group for education. The pupil places are not currently available and there are no projects in the pipeline to create the additional places. Where these new children would go to school is

not clear but even if able to be accommodated in the wider Colchester area, they will require car journeys (see point 7 re Sustainability)

11. Heritage assets and Grade II listed buildings

The proposed development would have a significant adverse effect on the setting and significance of nearby Grade I and II listed buildings, including The Wheelwrights House directly opposite the site, Medlars Cottage, Pond Cottage, Hill House and its associated wall and Pond House (4 listed buildings), and other listed heritage assets within the immediate rural setting. Pond House, Hill House, Vine Cottage and those listed buildings (5) on Church Road would have direct visibility of the site across the valley. The Wheelwrights House is directly opposite the site and is circa 18th C; Medlars Cottage circa 18th C, Holly Cottage (Former Box Cottage) Circa 17th C are all only a few metres from the site.

These buildings derive part of their significance not only from their architectural and historic fabric, but also from their relationship with the surrounding rural landscape, lanes, field patterns and settlement form. Their setting is presently experienced as part of a low-density rural village edge, with open agricultural land contributing to the historic character of Boxted and to the appreciation of these designated heritage assets.

This development of 150 dwellings would introduce a substantial suburban estate, associated highways works, lighting, traffic, domestic paraphernalia and activity into the immediate setting of these listed buildings. This would materially alter the way in which the buildings are experienced and would erode the rural surroundings that contribute to their significance.

Under section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the decision-maker must have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings, and features of special architectural or historic interest. The Planning Practice Guidance confirms that decisions where listed buildings and their settings are a factor must address these statutory considerations as well as the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

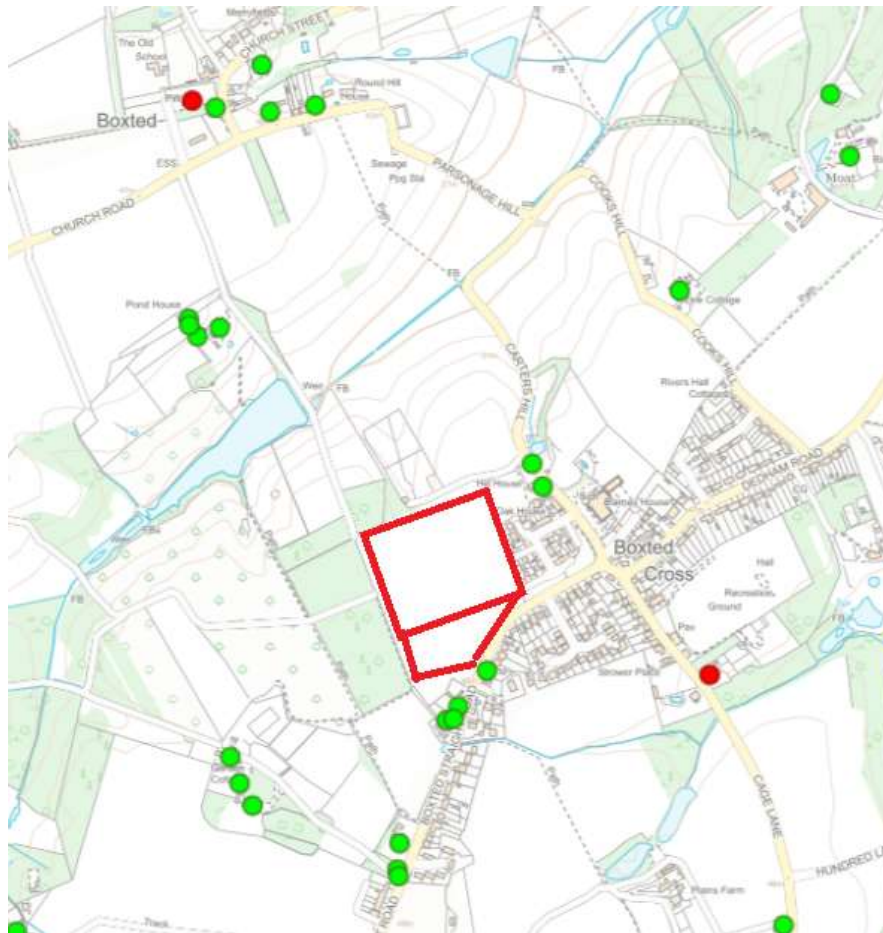


Figure 3 Listed Buildings (site outlined in red)

The National Planning Policy Framework requires applicants to describe the significance of affected heritage assets, including the contribution made by their setting, and requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets. Any harm to the significance of a listed building, including harm through development within its setting, should require clear and convincing justification. In this case the scale of development, its proximity to several Grade II listed buildings and its urbanising effect on the rural approach to Boxted mean that the harm is not adequately justified and should weigh heavily against the proposal.

12. Surface water runoff, drainage and impact on downhill pond and Straight Road ditches

The proposed development would replace greenfield agricultural land with extensive impermeable surfaces, including roads, roofs, driveways, parking areas and domestic hardstanding. We would wish to see an independently reviewed drainage strategy before decision, as there is a credible risk that surface water runoff could be accelerated, redirected or polluted before reaching the downhill pond at Pond House,

less than 250m from the site and onto Stright Road/into Straight Road ditches that ultimate feed the Black Brook.

Conclusion

Boxted Parish Council requests that this outline planning application is refused. Outline planning should not be permitted at all for the many reasons stated above. The access details proposed (which are required to be approved at this stage) are unacceptable. The developer should be required to submit a full planning application thus allowing the Councils to see the detailed proposal ensuring that the rural nature of this unsustainable location is safeguarded.