

EARLS COLNE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION

RESPONSE TO EXAMINER'S QUESTIONS BY EARLS COLNE PARISH COUNCIL]

JANUARY 2025

Question 2: Re. Policy ERCOL7 – Local Green Spaces

Initial engagement with the community identified that green spaces within or close to Earls Colne village were highly valued by the community. Initial work therefore looked at environmental designations to identify which green spaces were already protected. Examples include Brick Meadows which is a Local Nature Reserve. This space in particular was raised repeatedly through the community engagement process as one of the most important spaces in Earls Colne. Few other spaces were raised but the ones that were raised were assessed against the NPPF criteria. The text in paragraphs 6.17-6.27 in the Regulation 16 Neighbourhood Plan explains why each site is considered to meet the test of being 'demonstrably special to a local community and hold(ing) a particular local significance'. The sites were also considered to meet the other NPPF criteria (being in reasonably close proximity to the community and being local in character and not a significant tract of land). It is acknowledged that the full assessment against the three NPPF criteria should have been presented. This is therefore presented below:

Site	Proximity to community	Reason why site is demonstrably special	Not an extensive tract of land
Millennium Green	Immediately adjacent to the western edge of the settlement. Easily accessible from the A1124.	Beauty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine views over the valley. Wildlife: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An important native habitat. Recreational value: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only large green space for the community providing both formal and informal activities. • Provides formal play equipment for children which is well used. • Used for village events. 	4.9 hectares. Whilst relatively large, the land is deliberately intended to be for use by local residents and has been designed to provide a number of different, smaller spaces, e.g. picnic areas, woodland, pond, adventure playground.
Hobbs Way	In the heart of the village, just north of the High Street.	Recreational value: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A safe space for local children to play, avoiding the need to cross the A1124 to use other play facilities in the village as often as at present. • A safe space near the heart of the village for informal leisure, including ball games. 	0.69 hectares, the area is intended for use by the local residents of the new development.
Ryefields	Close to the south-eastern edge of the	Recreational value: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly used by walkers, including dog walkers. 	4 hectares. Whilst relatively large, it does have different areas

Site	Proximity to community	Reason why site is demonstrably special	Not an extensive tract of land
	village, it is relatively easily accessible on foot.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used for firework displays. Wildlife: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of habitats provided by the wet area, meadows, hedgerows and mature trees. Its location next to the Local Nature Reserve means it has an important function in helping the LNR to thrive. • Presence of community orchard fruit trees. 	(i.e. the lower wet area and the meadows) which make it feel like more than one space.

Question 4: Re. Historic England’s Representations at the Regulation 16 Consultation stage

The Parish Council’s proposed text for inclusion is as follows:

Historic Environment

Earls Colne has a number of notable heritage assets. In total there are 94 listed structures in the parish. This includes Earls Colne Priory, a scheduled monument, and the Parish Church of St Andrew, which is Grade I listed. All the other structures are Grade II listed. The large majority of these listed structures are buildings located on or close to the High Street. This forms the core of the Earls Colne Conservation Area, with the listed buildings giving the High Street much of its charm.

The Conservation Area is extremely extensive, covering not only the High Street but much of the built up area of the village and countryside beyond (particularly to the south of the A1124/High Street). It also extends significantly eastwards, including the built up areas to the east of Earls Colne village along the A1124 and the countryside immediately to the north. The extent of the Conservation Area covering both built up and countryside areas around much of Earls Colne is an important consideration for the design and setting of development proposals in this area.

Question 5: Re Environment Agency’s Representations at the Regulation 16 Consultation stage

The Parish Council’s proposed text for inclusion is as follows:

Flood risk and surface water drainage

Due to the presence of the River Colne, significant areas of land within the Neighbourhood Area are within Flood Zones 2 and 3, which significantly limits what development can be permitted there. Flood risk both from rivers and surface water flooding as a result of heavy rainfall are fundamentally important considerations when looking at development. Braintree Local Plan Policy LPP74 (Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage) provides clear policy guidance regarding the tests that must be applied to development depending on which flood zone it is located in. In addition, Braintree Local Plan Policy LPP75 (Surface Water Management Plan) requires development to have regard to and contribute positively towards delivering the aims and

objectives of the Braintree and Witham Surface Water Management Plan. It also directs development in Critical Drainage Areas to include Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) measures. This aligns with Policy ERCOL6B(iv) which also focuses on increasing resilience against future flooding. The requirement for trees and other planting in Policy ERCOL6B(iii) will also help in this regard.