

Text for Virtual Exhibition

Manor Oak Homes acquired an interest in land between Great Wheatley Road and Poyntens in 2016 and since then have been promoting it as a site for new housing through the emerging Rochford Local Plan.

They have made detailed submissions to the Council's numerous 'Call for Sites' and the Local Plan Issues and Options and Spatial Options consultations in 2018 and 2021, respectively, and this resulted in the site being identified in the Regulation 18 draft Rochford Local Plan published for consultation in February 2026 as a possible option for housing development (Site Ref: CSF077a).

In tandem with this, Manor Oak Homes and their team have been engaging with planning officers at Rochford District Council via the Council's formal pre-application service. In response to the positive feedback received and the current housing shortages in the district, Manor Oak Homes are developing proposals with a view to submitting an outline planning application for:

Up to 152 residential dwellings (including 50% affordable housing), together with green infrastructure, including public open space, play area, landscape planting and sustainable drainage systems and new access arrangements from Poyntens.

It is expected that the planning application will be submitted in late Spring 2026 and Manor Oak Homes would welcome your views on the emerging proposals.

The Site

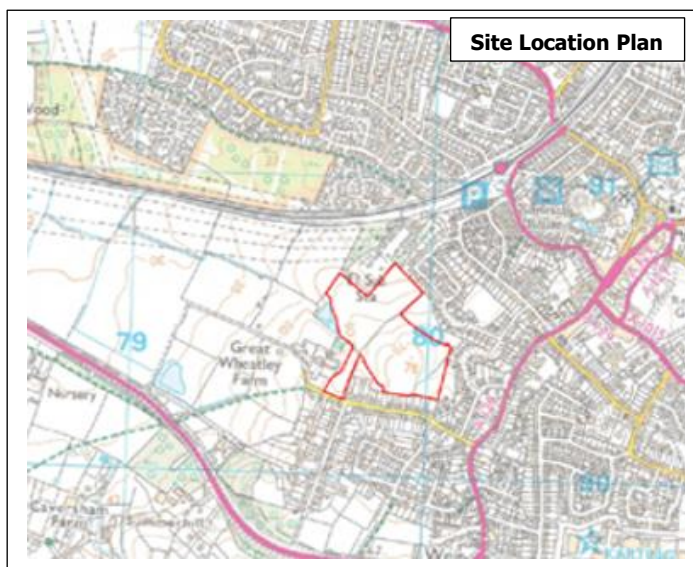
The location and extent of the site is shown on the Site Location Plan.

The site extends to 11.16ha and comprises two medium sized arable fields, a pocket of woodland to the southeast and a small tract of pastoral land which extends towards Great Wheatley Road to the south.

The topography of the site is undulating, with a distinct ridge of higher ground running northwest-southeast across the two arable fields.

Existing residential development on Poyntens/Spring Gardens, Burrows Way and Great

Wheatley Road abuts the site to the north, east and south, respectively, with further fields extending to the west. Planning permission was granted in March 2024 for the development of those fields as a sizeable solar farm¹. Great Wheatley Farm is located directly to the southwest of the site, and a large-scale substation is located to the north. A railway line which broadly runs east to west is located approximately 200m to the north of the site which further reduces the perceived tranquillity of the site. A network of major road corridors is located within the site's localised context to the west, comprising the A127 Southend Arterial Road, the A1245,



¹ Appeal Decision Ref: 3329891 – Land west of Great Wheatley Farm, Great Wheatley Road, Rayleigh, SS6 7AR, 11th March 2024

and the A130.

Lying immediately on the edge of the existing built-up area of Rayleigh and being surrounded on three sides by existing housing, the site enjoys a high degree of visual and physical containment.

The site is not covered by any statutory landscape or ecology designations. The site is however located within the zone of influence for the Essex Coastal Habitats Sites and appropriate mitigation will be required as part of any proposals.

The site is the subject of a TPO relating to a collection of trees along the northern boundary and the woodland edge within the southeast extent of site.

The site is not located in or in close proximity to a conservation area and there are no listed buildings on site. However, outside the south-western corner of the site, is Great Wheatley Farm, a group containing three Grade II listed buildings. The three listed buildings comprise Great Wheatley Farmhouse and two barns, all listed on 14th October 1986.

The site lies almost entirely within Flood Zone 1, however there is a small pocket of land internally within Flood Zone 2. There are areas of Flood Zone 2 and 3 to the southwest associated with ponds, but these are located outside of the site boundary. Development will not be located in the area at risk of flooding.

The site directly abuts Rayleigh settlement confines and is well connected to Rayleigh town centre, with the centre of the site approximately 600m from the town centre. Rayleigh is ranked as a 'Tier 1' settlement which is the highest order settlement type and recognised for having a range of services and facilities as well as public transport access. The site is sustainably located within convenient reach of existing local facilities and services being identified by the County's connectivity mapping as being in an area of moderate – good connectivity².

Planning Background

The proposals displayed at this virtual exhibition seek to help meet the substantial need for housing in Rochford District. The Development Plan is now out of date and does not provide for the number of homes needed in the local area. If this shortfall is to be addressed, the Council must allow other sites, including those outside existing settlement boundaries, to come forward and boost the supply of housing.

The technical work undertaken by the team has demonstrated that there are no physical or environmental constraints to the development of the site – this has been confirmed by the results of the Council's own assessment work set out in the Site Assessment Methodology Paper that formed part of the recent Regulation 18 draft Local plan consultation. The conclusions reached by that assessment are as follows:

Reference (Oct-25)	Historic Reference	Name/Address	Site Type	Settlement	Size (Ha)	Indicative Capacity	Proposed Use	Site Assessment (Oct-25)	Included in Reg.18 Technical Evidence Base Testing	Comment
CFS077(a)	N.A. (New Submission, Oct 2025)	Land to the north of Great Wheatley Road, Rayleigh	Call for Sites	Rayleigh	5.00	140	Housing, education, health, leisure/recreation, industrial, offices, mixed, cultural	Clear Potential Site Option	Included in Reg.18 Technical Evidence Base Testing –Urban Extension	This site received a Yellow RAYG score under the Site Assessment Criteria. It is located within the Green Belt but has a defensible Green Belt boundary. The site relates well to the existing settlement of Rayleigh. This site is not wholly or mostly within Flood Zones 2 or 3. This site is located away from sensitive landscapes, ancient woodland and internationally protected habitats. It is in a sustainable location in relation to walking, cycling and/or public transport. It would require allocation through the emerging Local Plan and is considered, at the Reg.18 stage, a Clear Potential Site Option with respect to the Small Site Assessment Criteria. This site has been included in the Reg.18 Technical Evidence Base Testing for further assessment and analysis.

Planning Policy: Policies relevant to the consideration of the site are contained in the Core Strategy (December 2011), the Allocations Plan (February 2014) and the Development Management Plan (December 2014). The Core Strategy was adopted in 2011, such that the strategic policies of the development plan are nearly 15 years old. It covers the period 2001-21 and is a plan prepared prior to the publication of current National Planning Policy. The result is that it does not allocate sufficient land to meet current housing needs and there is a shortfall in the Council's deliverable housing land supply; a position that will only worsen as the preparation of a new Local Plan, which could help rectify this position by allocating additional sites, is some years off.

The implication of this is that the Council is not able to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land and is therefore required by national planning policy to favourably consider proposals on unallocated sites unless the harms arising from them would not be outweighed by the benefits.

The site is currently located outside the boundary of Rayleigh in the Green Belt wherein there is a general presumption against inappropriate development. National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, the most recent version of which was published in December 2024. While the NPPF attaches great importance to protecting Green Belts, the most recent version introduced the concept of 'Grey Belt'. Grey Belt sites are areas within the Green Belt that do not strongly contribute to its main purposes and may be considered for development where certain conditions are met, namely that there is a demonstrable need for the development, the site is in a sustainable location and the proposals would meet a series of 'Golden Rules'; these relate to the provision of affordable housing (usually 50%), improvements to infrastructure and accessible green spaces.

Based upon the conclusions drawn by the Council's own Green Belt Study it is considered that the site meets the tests for Grey Belt and that it represents an appropriate location for housing development and would make a positive contribution to meeting the district's shortfall in housing delivery.

Pre-Application Discussions:

Discussions have taken place with planning officers at Rochford District Council, and it is accepted that the site has the potential to meet the tests for Grey Belt and be treated favorably as a location for housing. Indeed, being located on the edge of Rayleigh, the most sustainable of the district's settlements where a good range of services and facilities are available to meet the needs of their communities and support substantial growth, it is locationally sustainable.

The acceptability of any proposals will however be dependent on more detailed assessment and a demonstration that any negative impacts arising would be outweighed by the benefits the proposals would deliver. The planning application will therefore be supported by a comprehensive pack of technical assessments.

The Proposals

In response to the advice received from officers, Manor Oak Homes are currently developing their proposals for the site.

The application will seek outline planning permission (with all matters reserved except for means of access) for residential development of up to 152 homes including 50% affordable housing, green infrastructure, including public open space, play area, landscape planting and sustainable drainage systems and new access arrangements from Poyntens.

The purpose of the application will be to establish the principles for development and will be accompanied by a Parameter Plan that sets the spatial parameters for development and an Illustrative Layout, the purpose of which is to show the form the proposed built development could take.

Based upon the key features and constraints of the site, the Parameter Plan shows a proposed residential development area, green infrastructure, retained and enhanced landscape and ecology buffers and the location of the proposed vehicular/pedestrian accesses. The residential development area extends to 5.06ha, with the balance of the site (6.1ha) given over to open space and green infrastructure.

The Illustrative Layout shows how up to 152 new homes could be set within a new open space and landscape framework and would represent a logical and sustainable location for the organic growth of Rayleigh. The key elements of the proposed development comprise:

- Up to 152 dwellings comprising a mix of new homes in terms of size, type and tenure to reflect local identified housing needs.
- 50% of the proposed dwellings would be affordable.
- Built form no greater than 2.5 storeys – the majority would be 2 storeys, with occasional 2.5 storeys to articulate key locations. Development closest to existing properties on Great Wheatley Road would be single storey.
- A new combined vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access from Poyntens to the north.
- Provision of landscaped pedestrian route in the southern part of the site providing access through to Great Wheatley Road.
- Landscaped, meandering main street leading to a central shared surface square.
- Proposed dwellings respect amenity of existing surrounding dwellings with appropriate offset distances accommodated and proposed dwellings “siding” or “backing” on to existing curtilages.
- Provision of significant green infrastructure in the southern part of the site, which would include public open space, children’s play area, surface water attenuation features, wildflower meadows and wildlife habitat and a network of foot and cycle paths.
- A Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) which naturally manages the surface water run-off in the lowest part of the site based on the 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change scenario.
- Retention of existing hedgerows and vegetation along site boundaries, which would be reinforced with new soft landscape features including native trees and hedgerow planting within and along the edges of the development to respond appropriately to the site’s settlement edge location and to soften the impact of the built form in long distance views into the site.
- A policy-compliant level of car and cycle parking.

The site is capable of delivering a new high quality housing development that is well related to the wider settlement and responds positively to site context and constraints and is sensitive to the amenities of existing neighbouring development. The delivery of a range of housing types, sizes and tenures would make a positive contribution to local identified housing needs, alongside the provision of a substantial amount of new and accessible open space, including habitat creation and biodiversity net gain.

The site is influenced by its urban fringe setting and is well contained by adjoining residential development and other built form. The extent of mature vegetation within the site's immediate and wider setting would ensure that any impact upon the wider countryside as a result of development would be localised. Therefore, whilst the development of the site would result in the loss of some greenfield land on the edge of Rayleigh, it would not represent an unacceptable encroachment into the countryside, being contained by the existing urbanising features that are already characterised by the urban edge. The development of the site would form a logical extension to Rayleigh, bringing with it a more robust and enduring Green Belt edge through the use of structural woodland planting along the western site boundary.