

To: Colchester City Council

FAO: Planning Policy and Development Management Teams

Cc: Karen Syrett, Sandra Scott, Natural England, Local Ward Members

Date: 05/09/25

Subject: Environmental Concerns Regarding Further Residential Development in West Mersea

Dear Colleagues,

West Mersea Town Council (WMTC) is writing to express its deep concern regarding the potential environmental impacts of further residential development in West Mersea, particularly in relation to the marine protected areas surrounding the island.

The Council is aware that a detailed representation has recently been made to Natural England by the **Environmental Law Foundation (ELF)**, on behalf of a local resident, in relation to the implications of existing and future development for the **Blackwater, Crouch, Roach and Colne Estuaries Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ)** and the **Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC)**.

We understand that the representation raises serious issues about whether legal duties under the **Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009** and the **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017** have been properly addressed, particularly in relation to wastewater discharges from the **West Mersea Water Recycling Centre (WRC)**.

Given that Colchester City Council is currently reviewing its Local Plan, including consideration of further housing allocations for West Mersea, we believe these issues must now be treated with the urgency and seriousness they warrant.

In light of this, we respectfully request that Colchester City Council:

- 1. Reviews the concerns raised in the Environmental Law Foundation's representation** and assesses whether previous planning decisions - and the approach to future growth - are consistent with the Council's legal duties relating to the MCZ and SAC.
- 2. Confirms that it will ensure any future development proposals, including those being considered as part of the Local Plan review, are subject to appropriate environmental assessment**, with full regard to the condition of protected sites and the role of the WRC as a potential impact pathway.
- 3. Engages with Natural England and the Environment Agency to ensure full compliance with the applicable legal framework**, including early notification where development may pose a significant risk to conservation objectives.
- 4. Commits to meaningful consultation with West Mersea Town Council** in respect of all future development proposals affecting the island and its surrounding environment.

West Mersea's marine environment is a critical part of our community's identity and ecological value. With several protected features already in unfavourable condition, the Town Council is extremely concerned that further residential growth - without the appropriate infrastructure and environmental safeguards - risks causing long-term harm to these designated sites.

We look forward to your response and would welcome the opportunity for direct engagement on these matters in the coming months.

Yours sincerely,

Kirsty Wadsworth (Town Clerk)

West Mersea Town Council