

Eight Ash Green Parish Council - Response to the Local Plan.

Proposed further Housing Development along the Halstead Road, A1124

Permission has already been granted for 250 dwellings on site PP32 on the EAG / Aldham boundary with direct access onto the A1124.

There are now further proposals for site reference PP32a on the south side of the A1124 for a further 250 homes and an application already submitted for site PP31 for 145 homes.(ref 261381). There were approx. 730 properties in the village before Aspen Walk was built adding a further 150 properties to now total 880. If the building proposals above all go ahead, the village will have doubled in size from 15 years ago. This is not sustainable.

All of these sites will have direct access onto the already very busy A1124, which will add to the existing traffic volumes.

The A1124 is extremely busy, severely congested at times and has long tailbacks especially in the morning and evening rush hours. This is exacerbated by local traffic which needs to enter or egress a side road or a private driveway, and can wait for some time for a gap in the traffic. Vehicles making deliveries also cause tailbacks, as the A1124 is too narrow and has inadequate sight lines for other vehicles to pass safely.

When an "incident" occurs on the A1124 thus leading to major delays, traffic can only enter or leave the village via Turkey Cock Lane for Copford / A12, or Argents Lane towards West Bergholt. Both are narrow country lanes with limited passing points and totally unsuited to such volumes of additional traffic.

The number of heavy vehicle movements through Eight Ash Green for the proposed erection of pylons and attendant creation of access roads should also be taken into consideration. The A1124 would be the only viable route to access the relevant sites as the only alternatives are the two narrow country lanes as mentioned above.

It is impossible to turn against the traffic in busy times. Residents who live on the south side of the A1124 who need to turn right towards Aldham find it more convenient to travel in the opposite direction and use the mini roundabout at the Holiday Inn junction. This adds to the tailbacks of drivers wishing to access the A12 at junction 26 or the retail areas on the opposite side of the junction.

Please note that there are already eleven 'T' junctions between the A12 junction 26 and the Aldham boundary - a distance of under 2 miles. An additional access will be added for the site PP32 when that is under construction plus one or two further access roads for proposed Site PP32a. There are also several narrow tracks onto the A1124 which serve properties built further back from this road plus a considerable number of properties which access their frontages directly onto it.

Risky driver behaviour due to sheer frustration in long queues is witnessed on a regular basis. "U" turns are common as traffic will detour to avoid the long tail backs and use narrow country lanes to access the Stane Park area via London

Road, or join the A12 at junction 25 at Marks Tey. This leads to considerable extra vehicle movement in lanes unsuited for this volume of traffic with additional driver frustration.

A12 junction 26 is already at capacity as stated by ECC in early 2026. Traffic travelling from Colchester in the evening rush hour wishing to exit the A12 at junction 26 is once again starting to back up on the A12 carriageway due to the sheer volume of vehicles. This problem was alleviated when traffic lights were installed on the junction, but is now recurring once again. Within the village, morning and evening peak flows at the Spring Lane junction with A1124 are already well above capacity levels creating delay, yet no mitigation or plan has been identified to address it. The delay experienced at this junction at present is being allowed to continually grow to way beyond what is a sustainable limit yet the transport assessment document fails to provide any adequate evidence on this impact.

Essex County Council Place Services Report

This report states that Eight Ash Green has a distinctive identity, and confirms that its “notable cluster of smaller settlements” separated by open land is “particularly distinctive in EAG”.

This report also takes into consideration the same policies stated in the EAG Village Design Statement and the subsequent EAG Neighbourhood Plan which stresses that the open areas “enhance the rural feel and contributes towards the wider landscape and character of EAG” and must be protected. Proposed developments of this scale would be completely contrary to these reports.

The report also refers to the undesirability of “introducing the urban design of Colchester and Stanway into an existing rural area of EAG”.

Residential development on both sides of the A1124 would create an unwelcome ribbon development and totally urbanise the rural landscape between EAG and Aldham as well as obscuring the view of the Colne Valley on the north side.

Eight Ash Green has three distinct areas of woodland with its range of birds and bats. Fiddlers Wood (noted ancient woodland), Choats Wood and the church woodland. which will all be affected by development, mainly by the interruption of natural rainwater drainage even with any proposed mitigation in place.

There is also a wide range of other wildlife to consider. The ecology report and survey for the proposed site PP31 - which to the untrained eye appears to be simply an agricultural field used for crops - notes that 10 breeds of birds on the red endangered register overwinter there.

Any site proposed for development should not be considered by the Planning Committee until a full environmental and ecology report for each site has been completed.

Facilities and Sustainability

Residents of these developments will be totally reliant on their private cars for shopping, educational or entertainment purposes and employment, which

makes them completely unsustainable and therefore contrary to the Local Plan. The main facilities for supermarket shopping are situated in Stanway on the opposite side of the A12 junction 26 which can only be accessed by private car.

There is a very intermittent bus service which crosses over the A12 at junction 26 but that frequently does not operate and is currently under discussion with a view to discontinue. Bus service 88, which itself is inadequate today to provide a reliable service for school age children, does not connect to Stanway so the only access is by private car.

There are no safe walking or cycling routes over Junction 26 which would allow pedestrians and cyclists to be separated from the constant flow of traffic. In fact there are no dedicated cycle lanes in the area, and because of the narrow width of the A1124, there is insufficient space to install them. Pavements are also quite narrow along most of the length of this road. In many spots, pedestrians have to walk in single file and step close to the ditch or even into the road to allow someone to pass.

Safe walking and cycling routes that connect to the RTS and Stanway have been identified, but without the clarity on what that intention will actually deliver on the ground. The two identified sites (500 houses) are at the furthest point away from any connections so we fail to see how those meaningful changes to travel options can really be delivered.

Neither are there any direct bus services to Colchester Hospital, any doctor's surgery, nor to Marks Tey or Colchester railway stations.

Any proposed development in this area will therefore be totally reliant on private cars adding to the existing congestion and be contrary to the ethos of the Local Plan. We also note that transport assessment carried out by Essex highways as part of its impact assessment of the local plan lifespan has surprisingly used Aldham as one of its benchmark locations, completely skipping over any impact felt at the pinch point of the A1124 through EAG and we would question the rationale behind that decision. Without providing a clearer modelling for peak traffic flows from A12 junction 26 to Wood Lane junction how can any assessment be relied upon when it has not truly assessed the areas where the impacts will be the greatest.

Previously submitted planning applications state that there is a local shopping facility in the village which is accessible by foot. This 'facility' refers to the very limited range of items available at the local petrol station. Very few people walk there along the A1124 because of the hazards of constant traffic and narrow pavements and limited ability to cross over to the south side of the A1124. It is much safer by car.

Local Plan Point 12.98 -

The two residential allocations do not deliver a "sustainable extension to the village". These developments are at some distance from any amenity and travel there will be totally reliant on private cars as walking or cycling along the A1124 is so hazardous.

Also stated here is the suggestion that these two developments “build on the pattern of growth established through the Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan”. This statement is completely incorrect. The Neighbourhood Plan Environment Policy EP1 clearly states that development beyond the village settlement boundary “resulting in coalescence between Eight Ash Green and any neighbouring , existing or proposed settlements in adopted plans will not be supported.” Site PP32 which has already gained planning consent is adjacent to the Aspen Walk development in Eight Ash Green, but is actually wholly sited in the neighbouring village of Aldham so coalescence has already been breached. The proposed development PP32a is directly on the boundary of Aldham. The development is therefore contrary to the adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

Local Plan Point 12.99 -

The A1124 is certainly “a barrier to movement throughout the village”, but only because it is frequently congested with traffic and tailbacks. There is no explanation how this will improve the “connectivity and encourage more sustainable travel choices” as quoted here. As previously stated, the whole of these two proposed developments will be totally reliant on private car travel.

Local Plan Point 12.100

The proposed improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure are not explained. As previously stated, walking along the A1124 is hazardous because of heavy traffic and narrow pavements. There is insufficient road width to install cycle lanes and no safe ways for pedestrians and cyclists to cross junction 26 to access employment opportunities and shopping facilities. The only safe way to travel will be by private car. There is no prospect of “safer movement throughout the village” and access to all facilities will be limited only to residents who can drive themselves, creating pockets of isolation and separation within the new developments. The provision of a “safe crossing point” near to these proposed developments will only help residents who wish to visit their neighbours on the other side of the road. It will be of no help whatsoever to those who need to visit the village hall on the opposite side of the village as the distance is too great and the A1124 is far too dangerous to walk along, especially on dark evenings.

Local Plan Point 12.101

The Eight Ash Green Mobility Hub and Rapid Transit System need to be explained and clarified. A Rapid Transit System could deliver a genuine alternative to car usage but if residents of EAG are unable to viably access those services, the benefits of them are irrelevant. Both sites identified for development are, as previously mentioned, at the furthest point away from accessing the RTS. How exactly will the intention of providing a safe walking and cycling route be overcome when the challenges and barriers on ground are very clear.

As stated, there is physically insufficient room to install safe walking or cycle ways along the A1124, and no safe route to cross over junction 26 therefore no safe viable access to Stanway.

So on what grounds is “the improvement of local accessibility” based? There are

references to improvements to 'Halstead road junction' but no clear indication of what junction that relates to, what the improvements are, how any intended changes will provide benefit and to whom?

Educational Provision

The Essex County Council document "meeting the demand for Main School Places 2026-35" issued in January 2026 contains a footnote that it does not include the impact of the most recent changes in the proposed Local Plan or any further applications which may be proposed before the Local Plan is agreed. Therefore the impact of any development in Eight Ash Green will have not been anticipated in the ECC demand for school places.

Before any planning applications are decided, ECC should be asked to review their analysis of school places to explain how the pupils from any further development should be accommodated within the education system in Eight Ash Green.

Summary

The growth in housing and population numbers expected of EAG via PP32 / PP32a is disproportionately adverse given the already restricted services and very limited viable active travel options experienced currently. The local plan only offers a negative impact for EAG by dismissing its open rural character in favour of further housing provision, it fails to ensure there will be viable sustainable travel options to connect to the opportunities and facilities on the south side of Junction 26 and it ignores the opinions of the community where its impact will be felt the greatest.

In Conclusion

EAG has been designated a medium settlement. There is no range of facilities in the village to sustain this proposed amount of development.

Several landowners responding to the "call for sites" request have put forwards proposals for three further areas of land in the village totalling a further 400 dwellings over and above what has already been approved or previously submitted for consideration. These are purely speculative proposals and not part of any coherent strategy or long-term plan for the village. There are no proposals for either mitigation or 106 monies to provide road upgrades or greener travel options which makes any proposed development completely unsustainable.

There appears to be no strategy for dealing with the number of dwellings proposed in the areas west of Eight Ash Green, ie Gt and Lt Tey, The Colnes and Copford. The huge increase in the additional numbers proposed in these villages is not being treated as a whole, but by taking a piecemeal approach to each area in isolation from its neighbouring villages.

All of the proposed dwellings will need to travel along the A1124 to access the A12 at junction 26, and to cross the junction for shopping facilities. This is completely unsustainable. The A1124 has long tailbacks through Eight Ash

Green in the rush hours and Junction 26 was designated as over-capacity in early 2026. The southbound exit slip at junction 26 is already at capacity in the evening rush hour with cars queuing on the carriageway. This situation has become very noticeable in recent weeks. Further large areas of development along the A1124 will just cause gridlock with the additional problems of pollution from the many stationary cars in traffic jams. Even if pedestrians would prefer to walk along this road, the pollution will render it intolerable.