

PLANNING APPLICATION 19/01025/FUL
CALA HOMES 237 DWELLINGS, KELVEDON
STATEMENT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE BY ALAN STONES
ON BEHALF OF KELVEDON AND FEERING HERITAGE SOCIETY

The Kelvedon and Feering Heritage Society has as its remit amongst other things the protection of the character of the two villages, including from major housing development. We did not object to the principle of development of this site, but are disappointed with the design quality of the scheme that has resulted.

We objected to the Site-Wide Design Guide on the basis that, although the applicant made reference to the character of the area and to the principles of the Essex Design Guide, there was little evidence of heed paid to either. The primary road is lined with detached houses at 30 dph though the Essex Design Guide advises against this over 20 dph. The secondary roads are lined with parked cars at right-angles to the kerb, also advised against by the EDG. Moreover the houses are deep-plan and narrow-frontage with shallow-pitched roofs, also advised against by the EDG.

The design of housing is not a purely subjective matter. The government in the NPPF and National Design Guide requires the use of local design guides and codes to achieve design quality. BDC has adopted the Essex Design Guide but only uses it for garden sizes and back-to-back distances. The Essex Design Initiative's Residential Design Quality Assessment of 2009 found that the most successful schemes were the subject of site-specific design briefs prepared by the planning authority. Instead BDC has left this to the applicant, and unsurprisingly the Site-Wide Design Guide turned out to be tailor-made to the application scheme.

We complained to the Local Government Ombudsman about BDC's failure to use local design guidance in the case of the Bloor Homes application at Feering. We may well do so again with this application. A Housing Design Audit by University College London for the Place Alliance earlier this year found that 75% of new housing across the country was of poor design and should have been refused. BDC should be responding by increasing its involvement in the design of housing, not abandoning its use of design guidance and leaving site-specific design issues to the applicant.