Colchester City Council Local Plan Review - Regulation 19 Consultation

Soundness Representations concerning Draft Policy PP37: Land north of Park Lane, Langham

Highways Statement for Langham Parish Council (Report SR5)

Executive Summary

1. This representation challenges the soundness of Policy PP37 on the grounds that the evidence supporting the allocation does not adequately demonstrate that the proposed development can achieve **safe and suitable access to the Strategic Road Network (SRN)**.

2. PP37 proposes approximately 850 dwellings on land north of Park Lane, Langham. The development is materially dependent upon access to the A12 and, in particular, the junction arrangement between the A12 northbound exit and Park Lane. Concerns have been raised during preparation of the Plan regarding the geometry of this junction, its relationship with the adjacent fuel-station access, the speed and volume of traffic, pedestrian conditions and reported collisions involving vehicles failing to negotiate the turn.

3. Notwithstanding those concerns, the Council's August 2026 Transport Evidence does not appear to provide a site-specific highway-safety assessment of the A12/Park Lane access arrangement. The strategic modelling undertaken for the Regulation 19 evidence is not a substitute for demonstrating that the physical access required to serve PP37 is safe and suitable.

4. Nor does the Infrastructure and Delivery Plan (IADP) Stage 4 identify a specific improvement scheme for the A12/Park Lane junction capable of resolving the issue. The principal A12 intervention identified in the IADP relates to A12 Junction 29 and is not an improvement to the access serving PP37.

5. This creates a fundamental plan-making issue. It is not sufficient for the Plan to allocate a development of this scale while leaving the basic question of whether its principal access can safely serve the development to a subsequent planning application. Detailed design can properly be dealt with at application stage, but the Plan must first establish that a safe, suitable and deliverable access strategy exists.

6. For these reasons, the Inspector is respectfully requested to find that the evidence presently before the examination does not demonstrate that PP37 is sound. At a minimum, the Council should be required to provide additional site-specific highway-safety evidence, identify any necessary mitigation, and demonstrate how and when that mitigation will be secured and delivered.

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1. The issue

7. Policy PP37 allocates a substantial residential development at Langham, north of Park Lane. The allocation is therefore dependent upon the local road network and, ultimately, access to the A12.

8. The issue raised by this representation is not simply whether the strategic highway network has sufficient theoretical capacity to accommodate additional traffic. It is whether the **physical access arrangement required to serve PP37 can provide safe and suitable access for the scale of development proposed**.

9. That distinction is important. Strategic traffic modelling can identify network-wide congestion and capacity issues, but it does not necessarily demonstrate that an individual junction is geometrically appropriate or safe for the traffic generated by a particular allocation.

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2. National policy requirements

10. The December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which is the relevant national policy framework for assessment of a Plan proceeding through the legacy plan-making system subject to the applicable transitional arrangements, requires transport issues to be considered as part of plan-making and development management.

11. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF requires, amongst other matters, that development should give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, followed by access to high-quality public transport, and that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be, or have been, taken up.

12. Paragraph 115(b) also requires development to create places that are safe, secure and accessible for all users.

13. Paragraph 116 establishes the familiar high bar for refusing individual planning applications on highways grounds where there would otherwise be unacceptable development. It provides that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

14. The paragraph 116 test should not, however, be interpreted as relieving the Council of the obligation to demonstrate through the plan-making evidence that a strategic allocation is capable of being safely accessed and delivered.

15. In particular, the Plan should not rely upon a future planning application to resolve an issue which goes to the fundamental feasibility of the allocation itself.

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3. Strategic Road Network considerations

16. The A12 forms part of the Strategic Road Network. National Highways' policy on the delivery of sustainable development makes clear that the implications of strategic growth for the SRN should be identified through the plan-making process.

17. The National Highways policy is particularly relevant because it distinguishes between identifying the infrastructure requirements arising from planned growth and dealing subsequently with detailed implementation.

18. Where a transport assessment identifies an unacceptable safety impact or severe residual cumulative impacts on the SRN, the necessary intervention and the point at which it becomes necessary in relation to development occupation need to be established.

19. Consequently, the existence of a future planning application cannot, by itself, provide the necessary evidence that an allocation dependent upon an SRN access is presently deliverable.

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4. The August 2026 Transport Evidence

20. The Council's August 2026 Transport Evidence provides substantial strategic transport modelling. It considers the cumulative effects of the proposed allocations using the North Essex Model and other strategic modelling techniques, with microsimulation undertaken at selected locations.

21. However, the identified microsimulation locations include A12 Junctions 25–26, A12 Junction 29 and A133 Clingoe Hill. The A12/Park Lane/Langham access arrangement is not identified as one of the locations subject to equivalent microsimulation analysis.

22. This is significant because the safety issue raised by PP37 is fundamentally a **junction and access issue**, rather than merely a strategic traffic-flow issue.

23. The strategic modelling therefore does not demonstrate, of itself, that the existing A12/Park Lane arrangement can safely accommodate the traffic generated by approximately 850 dwellings.

24. The Transport Evidence also does not appear to provide the necessary site-specific geometric assessment demonstrating, for example:

a. adequate visibility and stopping sight distance;

b. appropriate junction geometry;

c. satisfactory turning movements and swept paths for development traffic;

d. safe interaction between the A12 exit, Park Lane and the adjacent fuel-station access;

e. satisfactory arrangements for pedestrians and cyclists;

f. appropriate consideration of the speed environment and traffic composition; and

g. the effect of the additional development traffic upon the safety of the junction and its approaches.

25. These are matters which should be resolved, at least in principle, before the Plan relies upon the junction as the principal access to a development of this scale.

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5. DMRB and technical assessment

26. The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), including CD 123 concerning the geometric design of at-grade priority and signal-controlled junctions, provides an established technical framework for assessing junction geometry.

27. This representation does not assert that every provision of DMRB is automatically applicable as a mandatory standard to an existing local-road junction. Rather, the concern is that the Council has not demonstrated through its evidence that the proposed access arrangement has been subjected to an appropriate technical assessment against recognised highway-design and safety principles.

28. Where a strategic allocation of approximately 850 dwellings depends upon an existing junction with the characteristics described above, the absence of such evidence is material.

29. In particular, the Council should demonstrate the visibility, stopping sight-distance, junction geometry, turning requirements and interaction with adjoining accesses upon which the conclusion that PP37 can be safely accessed is based.

30. If the Council considers that the existing arrangement is satisfactory without modification, the evidence should explain the technical basis for that conclusion.

31. If modification is necessary, the Plan should identify the required intervention, its estimated cost, its funding mechanism and the point in the development programme at which it must be delivered.

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6. Existing safety concerns

32. The concern is not theoretical. Representations made during preparation of the Plan have identified the unusual geometry of the A12 northbound exit into Park Lane, including the sharp turn and its interaction with the access to the adjacent fuel station. Appendix A to this representation includes photographs illustrating this unusual geometry. Appendix B references evidence gleaned from a 15 minute continuous video recording of the A12/Park Lane junction approach taken during the evening rush hour on Tues 6th October 2026 (the video is not attached, but can be made available if required for examination).

33. Concerns have also been raised regarding the speed of traffic, vehicles failing to negotiate the turn, the absence or inadequacy of pedestrian infrastructure and reported collisions involving vehicles leaving the A12 and striking the property nearest the junction.

34. These matters should have prompted a proportionate and site-specific safety investigation as part of the evidence supporting the allocation.

35. The existence of such concerns does not establish, by itself, that the junction is unsafe. It does, however, make it particularly important that the Council demonstrates through objective evidence why the allocation can safely depend upon it.

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7. Absence of identified mitigation

36. The August 2026 IADP Stage 4 identifies a number of transport infrastructure projects relevant to Langham and the wider network.

37. These include the proposed A12 Junction 29 improvement, identified at approximately £15 million, together with Langham cycling infrastructure and a Langham–Boxted public transport connection.

38. However, the IADP does not identify a specific scheme to improve the A12/Park Lane junction serving PP37.

39. This is a significant omission if the Council considers that improvements to that junction are required to make the allocation safe and deliverable.

40. Conversely, if no improvement is required, the Council should explain precisely what technical evidence demonstrates that the existing arrangement can safely accommodate the traffic associated with the allocation.

41. The current evidence therefore appears to leave the Inspector with neither of the two essential propositions:

a. a demonstrated conclusion that the existing access is safe and suitable for the proposed quantum; or

b. an identified, funded and deliverable intervention which would make it so.

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8. Deferral to the planning application stage

42. It may be argued that the detailed access arrangements can appropriately be determined through a subsequent planning application.

43. That is accepted to the extent that detailed engineering design, final access arrangements and detailed mitigation can properly be reserved for a later stage.

44. However, there is an important distinction between **detailed design** and **fundamental deliverability**.

45. The Plan should establish that there is a technically feasible means of providing safe and suitable access before allocating approximately 850 dwellings in reliance upon that access.

46. Otherwise, the Plan risks allocating development on the assumption that a satisfactory solution will subsequently be found, without evidence that such a solution is actually available.

47. That would be inconsistent with the requirement for the Plan to be justified and effective. A strategic allocation should be based upon a realistic and deliverable infrastructure strategy rather than an unresolved assumption about a future planning application.

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9. Sustainable transport does not remove the highway-safety issue

48. The Council has identified sustainable transport measures for Langham, including cycling infrastructure, mobility measures and a proposed Langham–Boxted public transport connection.

49. Such measures are potentially valuable and should form part of the mitigation strategy for PP37.

50. They do not, however, demonstrate that the principal road access is safe.

51. A modal-shift assumption cannot reasonably be treated as eliminating the need to establish safe access for the substantial volume of motor traffic which the development will inevitably generate.

52. Moreover, the Stage 4 IADP identifies some of the relevant Langham transport measures as unfunded. Their inclusion in the infrastructure schedule therefore does not necessarily demonstrate that they will be delivered when required.

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10. Soundness

53. The concerns identified above engage directly with the statutory tests of soundness.

54. In particular, the evidence presently available does not satisfactorily demonstrate that PP37 is **effective**, because the infrastructure necessary to provide safe access has not been sufficiently established.

55. It also raises issues of **justification**, because the strategic evidence does not appear to provide a proportionate site-specific demonstration that the principal access arrangement is safe and suitable for the proposed scale of development.

56. The issue is not whether every detail of the eventual highway design must be resolved before adoption. The issue is whether there is sufficient evidence at the plan-making stage to establish that the allocation is realistically capable of being delivered safely.

57. In the absence of that evidence, there is a material risk that the Plan is allocating development first and seeking to establish the feasibility of its principal access afterwards.

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11. Matters for Examination

58. The following questions are suggested for consideration by the Inspector:

1. What evidence demonstrates that the A12/Park Lane access can safely serve the traffic generated by PP37?
2. Why was the A12/Park Lane junction not subjected to equivalent site-specific microsimulation or other detailed safety assessment in the August 2026 Transport Evidence?
3. What visibility and stopping-sight-distance standards have been applied?
4. Has the junction geometry been assessed against the relevant DMRB and other applicable highway-design principles?

5. Has the interaction between the A12 exit, Park Lane and the adjacent fuel-station access been specifically assessed?
6. What collision and personal-injury accident data has been considered for the junction and its approaches?
7. If the existing junction is considered safe without improvement, what technical evidence supports that conclusion?
8. If improvement is required, what precise intervention is proposed?
9. Why is no specific A12/Park Lane improvement scheme identified in the Stage 4 IADP?
10. What funding and delivery mechanism will secure any necessary highway intervention?
11. At what stage of PP37's development must that intervention be operational?
12. How will the Council ensure that development cannot reach an unsafe level of occupation before the necessary intervention is delivered?

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12. Requested modification

59. The Inspector is respectfully requested to conclude that the evidence currently before the examination does **not adequately demonstrate that PP37 can be served by safe and suitable access to the Strategic Road Network**, and that the allocation is consequently not presently demonstrated to be sound.

60. In particular, the Inspector is requested to require the Council to provide, before the allocation can properly be found sound:

a. a site-specific highway-safety and access assessment of the A12/Park Lane junction;

b. appropriate technical assessment of visibility, stopping sight distance, junction geometry, turning movements and the interaction with the adjacent fuel-station access;

c. consideration of relevant collision data and other objective safety evidence;

d. a clear conclusion as to whether the existing junction can safely accommodate PP37 at its full proposed development quantum;

e. where necessary, a defined highway improvement scheme with an identified cost, funding mechanism and delivery responsibility;

f. a clear occupation trigger or other enforceable mechanism ensuring that necessary highway improvements are delivered before they are required.

61. If the Council cannot provide this evidence and demonstrate a safe and deliverable access strategy, the Inspector is respectfully requested to find **Policy PP37 unsound and recommend that it be deleted or otherwise modified so that the allocation is not dependent upon an unresolved highway-safety issue**.

62. The fundamental point is that a development allocation of this scale should not proceed to adoption on the assumption that a safe solution to its principal access arrangement will be found later. The Examination should be satisfied now that the allocation is capable of being safely and effectively delivered.

13. Appendix A

63. Photos illustrating the unusual geometry of the northbound A12/Park Lane junction.

63A: General view of Shell garage on A12 northbound carriageway



63B: Garage exit onto A12 northbound carriageway



63C: A12 Garage on-slip adjacent to A12 Park Lane off-slip



63D: A12 Park Lane offslip approaching sharp 110 degree turn into Park Lane



14. Appendix B

64. Information gleaned from video recording of the A12/Park Lane junction

A 15 minute continuous video recording was made between 17:33 and 17:48 during the evening peak hour on Tues 6th October 2026 (the video is not attached, but can be made available if required for examination).

During the 15 minute recording:

44 vehicles exited the A12 northbound into Park Lane. 13 of those vehicles (30%) encroached onto the advisory white safety hatching area during their A12 exit manoeuvre.

11 vehicles joined the A12 northbound from the Shell Garage. 5 of those vehicles (45%) encroached onto the advisory white safety hatching area during their A12 joining manoeuvre.

During the Local Plan period, PP37 will likely triple the number of vehicles exiting the A12 into Park Lane during the evening peak hour. Over the same period, general traffic growth along the A12 will likely increase by some 20-25%.

At the end of the Local Plan period, this indicates the potential for typical evening peak hour flows of 1 vehicle exiting the A12 into Park Lane every 7 seconds, in parallel with 1 vehicle joining the A12 from the Shell Garage every 6o seconds.