

WILL QUINCE MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Ms Lola Adebiji

SENT VIA EMAIL

Our Ref: ZA31034

15 July 2019

Dear Ms Adebiji,

Re: Middlewick Ranges

Thank you for taking the time to contact me in order to express your concerns with the future of Middlewick Ranges, which I have carefully noted.

I completely share the concerns of local residents and would rather no development on the site at all. I love making use of Colchester's green space with my family to walk our dog, Charlie, and I find it sad to see that there is a real prospect of a development of as many as 1,000 new homes on part of the Middlewick Ranges site.

I believe it to be important to highlight that I have been outspoken in my opposition to the proposed development and my support for the Wick. In my role as Colchester's MP, I have put aside my personal view in preference of no development on the site at all and gone to great lengths to find a pragmatic solution for the issue and to speak up for my constituents.

I formally objected to Colchester Borough Council's Draft Local Plan which included the allocation of 1,000 homes on the Middlewick Ranges site.

I understand the need for housing, in particular for social rent, but I do not believe that Colchester Borough Council needed to allocate 1,000 homes on Middlewick Ranges. This argument became stronger when considering Colchester Borough Council's support and plans for garden communities, which brick up to be around 40,000 homes locally. In addition, Colchester Borough Council regularly exceed their housing targets for new homes in Colchester. These reasons make me question the need for the allocation of 1,000 homes on the Middlewick Ranges site.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) have decided to sell the land. It is unfortunate that this is the case and I challenged this with Ministers at the MOD and tried to stop the proposed sale. However, following meetings with them, I can understand the rationale behind their decision. They no longer have the need for two ranges in such close proximity, there are significantly more safety and security issues at Middlewick compared to Fingringhoe and the closure of Middlewick will allow for state-of-the-art upgraded facilities to be built at Fingringhoe. It is also important to note that the money raised from the sale of the land is to be re-invested in Defence.

However, I do recognise the value of the Middlewick Ranges site and the importance that constituents attach to it. I believe it is a fantastic area of green space, even with a large portion of it

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR COLCHESTER

Westminster Address: House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA Telephone 020 7219 8049

Constituency Office: 37 Layer Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 7JW Telephone: 01206 545 990

www.willquince.com

will.quince.mp@parliament.uk

fenced off. I have therefore been working towards an alternative pragmatic solution which could work for everyone.

I met with the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, to explore the option for creating a new country park on part of the Middlewick Ranges. This was followed up with a productive meeting with the Secretary of State's Office.

In addition, I raised this issue in Parliament at Defence Questions, where I secured a commitment from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence People and Veterans, the Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP, to meet with me and explore my alternative plan for a country park on the Wick. Further to that I met with the Secretary of State for Defence.

I also met with the Garrison and Brigade Commanders, and I am persuaded that there are clear operational and safety reasons behind the MOD's decision to close and sell the Middlewick Ranges and thereby significantly upgrade their activities at Fingringhoe.

My proposed pragmatic plan was to build just enough houses on the Wick so as to enable the purchase the site releasing a large proportion of the land for a new Middlewick Country Park, which would be owned and maintained by the local authority. I have met with Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council to discuss this proposal and I am still speaking with Essex County Council who have expressed an interest and we are exploring options further. I will keep local residents updated on progress.

Ultimately, however, it rests with Colchester Borough Council as the Planning Authority to make the decision as to what, if anything gets built on the Wick, and I am just as concerned as local residents are with the proposals to build as many as 1,000 homes in an area where there simply isn't the infrastructure to support it.

I want to assure you that I will continue in my role as Colchester's MP to voice concerns about the future of the Wick and work with all interested parties to find an alternative solution.

The MOD Defence Infrastructure Organisation has commenced a consultation and I would strongly encourage you to take part, please find the details below:


www.middlewickconsultation.co.uk Tel: 03308384199

Address: Defence Infrastructure Organisation, c/o Camargue, 11 Waterloo Street, Birmingham, B2 5TB.

I will be taking part in the consultation and have already written to the Defence Infrastructure Organisation requesting an urgent meeting

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me and I hope this information is helpful in reassuring you about all of my efforts.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "William Linn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "W" and a long, sweeping tail.