

Local Plan Committee

Tuesday, 05 July 2016

- Attendees:** Councillor Nick Barlow (Deputy Chairman), Councillor Nigel Chapman (Member), Councillor Andrew Ellis (Member), Councillor Adam Fox (Member), Councillor Martin Goss (Chairman), Councillor John Jowers (Group Spokesperson), Councillor Gerard Oxford (Group Spokesperson), Councillor Martyn Warnes (Group Spokesperson)
- Substitutes:** Councillor Phil Coleman (for Councillor Nick Cope), Councillor Christopher Arnold (for Councillor Sue Lissimore)

76 Minutes of 4 April 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2016 were confirmed as a correct record.

77 Minutes of 25 May 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2016 were confirmed as a correct record.

78 Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation

Councillor Arnold (in respect of his role as Honorary Treasurer of Colchester Symphony Orchestra) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Councillor Goss (in respect of his Deputy Chairmanship of Myland Community Council) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his membership of Essex County Council's Development Regulation Committee) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Councillor Warnes (in respect of his spouse's ownership of property in the vicinity of the Abberton and Langenhoe housing sites) declared a pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Councillor Warnes (in respect of his spouse's relatives' ownership of property in

the vicinity of the site south of Berechurch Hall Road) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services giving details of the Preferred Options Local Plan document which, once approved, was due to be the basis of a public consultation for a period of eight weeks between July and September 2016.

Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager presented the report and, together with Ian Vipond, Strategic Director, responded to Councillors questions. Karen explained that the Council had begun preparation of a new Local Plan in 2014 and the Local Plan Committee had considered Issues and Options as well as progress on the development of the plan and its supporting evidence base. The Council had also invited suggestions for potential sites for development for suitability assessment. A Local Development Scheme setting out the timetable for Local Plan development had been agreed in December 2015.

It was now proposed to consult on a Preferred Options plan to gather views from the public and stakeholders with Braintree and Tendring Local Plan consultations running to a similar timetable. The plan would be revised to reflect comments received during consultation, updated evidence and any other required changes, such as national policy updates. The submission version of the plan was intended to be published at the end of 2016, followed by a further period of consultation with submission to the Government in spring 2017 for public examination and subsequent adoption.

Braintree, Colchester, Tendring and Essex Councils had been working closely together particularly in relation to the proposals for new garden communities. In recognition of that work it was proposed to have a single joint strategic section in each Local Plan known as the North Essex Strategic Part 1. It was likely that this element would be examined jointly followed by separate examinations of each Local Plan's unique policies.

All parts of the plan were based on a comprehensive evidence base covering a wide range of topics which would need to be updated and reviewed as the Local Plan developed. Part of Local Plan preparation also included preparation of a Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) which assessed the environmental implications of every policy and site allocation in the Local Plan, together with all reasonable alternatives.

Part 1 of the Local Plan set out the strategic approach to meet the objectively assessed need for development land as well as policies on sustainable development; overall housing and employment needs; infrastructure; place shaping; the spatial strategy; and garden communities. The garden communities policy contained a recommendation for two broad areas of search for garden communities to the east and west of Colchester

which were being recommended as a way of meeting need which would ensure that infrastructure, facilities and services would be put in place when they were needed and that the local authority could control how quickly land was released for housing, employment, retail and other uses. Part 2 of the Plan included allocations and policies organised by area, so that residents would be able to easily find planning information specific to their local community.

Colchester's Spatial Strategy (Policy SG1) provided for a settlement hierarchy ranking areas of the Borough in order of their sustainability merits and the size, function and services provided in each area. This focused growth on the urban area of Colchester, with the Town Centre at its heart, reflecting its position as the main location for jobs, housing, services, and transport. The town centre would sit above other parts of urban Colchester, including Stanway and North Colchester, with the next tier of preferred growth including garden communities which would straddle boundaries with adjacent authorities and provide new greenfield sites in sustainable communities which would grow gradually over time, extending beyond the plan period. The second tier also included proportionate growth in existing Sustainable Settlements within the Borough, including 15 large villages and the District Centres of Tiptree, West Mersea, and Wivenhoe. In the remaining Other Villages and Countryside areas of Colchester, the Council would limit new development to appropriate new infill developments; development on previously developed land; or extensions, restorations or alterations to existing building within the defined village limits. New development in the open countryside would only be permitted on an exceptional basis to preserve its rural character. The Council would need to meet an Objectively Assessed Housing Need of 920 units a year over the plan period and the report demonstrated a 15 year supply (14,720) plus a 5% buffer for the first 5 years (14,950) had been identified.

In addition, Policy SG3 provided the policy and allocations to support economic growth in the Borough, Policy SG4 addressed the provision of infrastructure to support new development, the Environmental Assets section of the plan provided policies on the protection and enhancement of the Borough's natural environment and green infrastructure and also included a Climate Change Policy - Place Policies set out allocations and policies for specific parts of the Borough whilst the Urban Colchester policies divided Colchester into four broad geographic areas (Central, North, East and West) in line with the place-based approach. The Knowledge Gateway/University; Severalls/Northern Gateway; and Stanway had been given specific policies to address their unique strategic economic growth position within the Borough and the Hythe, North Station and the Zoo had been designated as Special Policy Areas to provide a clear context against which to promote opportunities for appropriate growth and expansion, enhanced public realm and connectivity. Policies SS1-SS18 provided allocations and guidance for the 15 large villages and three Rural District Centres which together were categorised as 'Sustainable Settlements'. The 25 development management policies included in the Preferred Options document set out how development would be managed to ensure that it contributed towards the vision and objectives, covering the following topics:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Community Facilities
- New Education Provision
- Strategic Sports Provision
- Tourism, Leisure and Culture
- Economic Development in Rural Areas
- Agricultural Development and Diversification
- Affordable Housing
- Housing Density
- Housing Diversity
- Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation
- Housing Standards
- Domestic Development
- Rural Workers
- Design and Amenity
- Historic Environment
- Retention of Open Space
- Provision of Open Space
- Private Amenity Space
- Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Sustainable Access to Development
- Parking
- Flood Risk
- Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS)
- Renewable Energy, Water, Waste and Recycling.

James Marchant addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to the Introduction / Process. He referred to the recent outcome of the European Union Referendum and the potential impact of the UK's departure from the European Union on property development and the resulting implication for the Housing Needs Assessment.

Alan Walker, on behalf of Marks Tey Parish Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the Plan relating to the Introduction / Process. He explained that the content of the Local Plan had created a number of concerns for local people particularly those living close to the areas identified for growth such as Marks Tey. Marks Tey Parish Council supported the joint working being undertaken by the neighbouring Local Authorities. He considered that the Options Document contained some ambitious proposals whilst also including the views of the Parish Council in relation to infrastructure deficit in Marks Tey and the threat to the community derived from the garden community concept. He referred to a lack of consultation with the community about a potential garden community and the hopes of the Parish Council to work alongside the Borough Council to formulate policies for the good of the community as a whole. He also sought more detail in terms of timescales.

Councillor J. Scott-Boutell attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to the Introduction / Process. She sought reassurance regarding the information to be provided to local residents and the need for meaningful consultation including drop-in workshops and information being provided in terms which are understandable to people unfamiliar with the planning process. She asked for clarification regarding the outcome of the consultation and the decision making process associated with it and what would be defined as a minor amendment to the proposals which would not require reference back to the Committee.

Councillor Willetts attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to the Introduction / Process. He was of the view that the Consultation Document was not a finished piece of work and that it concentrated too heavily on plans for housing rather than planning for employment which may assist in reducing the numbers commuting to London for work. He considered that productivity in Colchester was poor with 37% of workers being employed outside the Borough. He challenged the basis of the Objectively Assessed Housing Need in the light of the outcome of the EU Referendum and he considered the vote to leave the European Union indicated that the majority view was that people did not want further housing development and population growth. He therefore considered the proposals contained in the Consultation Document were based on out of date evidence. He was further of the view that residents living in rural areas would cease to co-operate if the proposals were not based on sustainable evidence which fitted with the economic development of the Borough. He advocated the scaling back of housing development and, in particular, had reservations about development in West Tey as the road and rail network would not be able to cope with the development proposed.

Councillor Davies attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to the Introduction / Process. She sought clarification regarding those village communities which were yet to adopt a Neighbourhood Plan and whether they should be advised to continue to work towards this as an aim and over what period of time. She referred to the length of the Consultation Document and considered that additional time was required to allow adequate time to consider the contents and to respond to the consultation. She further suggested that the consultation period should last for eight weeks and extend beyond September 2016.

Asa Aldis, on behalf of Wivenhoe Parish Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to the East Colchester/West Tending garden community. He considered that Colchester was massively over developed and that the development plans could not be sustained in what was essentially a rural town. He voiced his concerns in relation to the impact on the local hospital and local schools which were not in a position to support the anticipated future growth. He was of the view that the garden community proposals

to the East of Colchester were entirely in the interests of the developers, not the local community and could not understand the use of top grade agricultural land for this purpose. He requested the Borough council to listen to the local residents on these issues, reiterating the view put forward by all Wivenhoe Town Councillors who were opposed to the development of a garden community to the east of the town.

William Sunnucks, on behalf of the Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex (CAUSE), addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the Plan relating to the East Colchester/West Tending garden community. He supported the proposal to develop a garden community in East Colchester as he was of the view that it would integrate well with the nearby University of Essex and the aspiration to create a hi-tech employment area. The university was also short of accommodation for students and the area was in need of improvements to the road network, whilst additional improvements to the railway line to Clacton would be worthwhile. He was of the view that new businesses associated with the Science Park would be successful and therefore welcomed this as an alternative vision for further discussion.

Councillor Cory attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to the East Colchester/West Tending garden community. He welcomed the principle of garden communities but was not in support of East Colchester as a suitable location. He was of the view that this area had already suffered from too much urban expansion and voiced his concern about the impact on roads, congestion, hospitals, flooding and schools and the consequent loss of wildlife and natural habitats. He was of the view that population growth could not continue indefinitely and a period of consolidation was required during which time the benefits and implications could be fully considered and explored. He referred to the Government guidance which indicated that garden communities required a population of at least 15,000 in order to be sustainable. He was particularly concerned about the impact on local schools and the need for additional educational resources to be identified. He supported the plans for growth at the University of Essex and agreed with the request from others for the Local Plan proposals to be reconsidered in the light of the majority view for the UK to leave the European Union. He advocated lower and slower growth which would be more sustainable and achieve greater support from local residents.

Councillor Scott attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to the East Colchester/West Tending garden community. She welcomed the partnership work which had been undertaken by officers with those from the neighbouring District Councils. She was mindful that recent Governments had delivered considerable freedoms for development within the planning processes but was of the view that for residents it was vital to deliver jobs and infrastructure as well. She was of the view that a transport link to the A120 needed to be secured and that future development needed to ensure that there was no negative impact on local road networks. She acknowledged the need for population growth and

accepted the requirement for this to be accompanied by a commitment to providing additional schools. She was, however, not convinced that the Wivenhoe community was being safeguarded and did not consider Wivenhoe should be expected to carry the burden of a new garden community. She agreed with the view that Wivenhoe was as a separate village community which did not wish to be subsumed within an extended Colchester. She also agreed with the view that the consultation period needed to be extended.

Councillor Chillingworth attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to garden communities. He explained that he was making representations on behalf of the three councillors for Rural North Ward. He congratulated the Spatial Policy Team for their work in drafting the Local Plan document and welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with other neighbouring Local Authorities. He acknowledged the need for development and accepted that brown-field sites were no longer readily available in the Borough. He acknowledged that a new garden community in West Tey was a logical conclusion given the transport links and improvements proposed but he advocated the need for the development to be timed such that existing highway problems associated with the A120 had been resolved. He was also concerned that the impact of the decision to leave the European union would mean that the financial plans associated with transport improvements may now be in doubt and, as such, was of the view that the proposal to the East of Colchester needed to be considered first. He went on to support the need for limited development in the villages. He was concerned about the total amount of new housing identified in the draft plan for Langham, bearing in mind the amount requested locally had been limited to between 80 and 85.

Andrea Luxford-Vaughan, on behalf of Wivenhoe Parish Council' addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to the East Colchester/West Tendring garden community. She was of the view that the proposal for a garden community in the East of Colchester could not be sustainable and requested more details about the proposals and the likely impact. She referred to the current level of housing in Wivenhoe and was concerned that the proposals would effectively double the population of the community. This would mean that the school provision would be inadequate and was likely to lead to children being required to travel across the Borough to attend schools. She was of the view that the Council should consider not completing a Local Plan, she was unaware of any sanction to adopting this approach and she was further of the view that Tendring District Council should be required to deliver additional housing to accommodate demand in the local area.

Sir Bob Russell addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) regarding that part of the Plan relating to the East Colchester/West Tendring garden community. He referred to the need to protect the Salary Brook area and supported proposals to safeguard green infrastructure and to celebrate the natural environment generally. He sought additional information on the

specific proposals as to where housing would be built and the boundaries to be protected for open space purposes.

Tom Foster, on behalf of the Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex (CAUSE) addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to the West of Colchester/ East Braintree garden community. He questioned the merits of contemplating the development of a garden community to the west of Marks Tey prior to the delivery of new improvements to the A120. He was particularly concerned that the road improvements may now be delayed beyond 2025 as a consequence of the decision regarding the European Union. He questioned why an alternative was not being considered, he was concerned that road junctions would not have sufficient capacity and considered no answers were being provided regarding the delivery of associated infrastructure. He requested the Committee to consider delaying the approval of the draft plan and for the views of residents to be heard.

David Churchill, on behalf of Iceni Projects, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the Plan relating to the West of Colchester/ East Braintree garden community. He explained that he represented a team of land holders at Marks Tey and that the proposals for the garden community included associated infrastructure to deliver improvements not only to roads but also to schools, leisure and the local community generally. In addition, job opportunities would be created along with improvements to Stansted Airport. The correct delivery of the garden community was crucial to its success and this required all those parties involved accepting responsibility for its success. He considered this responsibility had already been demonstrated through the willingness to engage with the various Local Authorities.

Councillor J. Scott-Boutell attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to the West of Colchester/ East Braintree garden community. She referred to the need for priority to be given to the retention of areas of open space and questioned how this would be addressed. She asked about the ratio of employment land to retail and leisure land in the Stanway Strategic Employment Zone and also sought clarification regarding the outcome of the Stane Park appeal and the implications this would have on the contents of the draft plan.

Steven Kosky, on behalf of Barton Wilmore, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to the omission of Langham Village. He explained that he was representing the promoters of the Langham garden community which had not been recommended for inclusion in the draft plan. He considered this to be an unsound omission as it was imperative that the strategy included a broad range of sites. He questioned the assumptions regarding the timing of the delivery of the alternative garden community as their cross boundary locations were likely to lead to delays. The proposal for Langham

was entirely located in Colchester Borough and, as such, could be delivered more quickly, it did not require the same degree of infrastructure to be in place, it was within easy reach of Colchester town centre and benefitted from a rapid bus route and cycle access. The proposals also included a new secondary and two primary schools, as such, he considered this to be a seriously missed opportunity.

Paul Newton, on behalf of Barton Wilmore' addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to the Vision / Objectives / Strategy. He explained that he was representing the Tollgate Partnership. He did not consider the draft plan to be sufficiently robust as it was based on out of date evidence and was inconsistent. He considered the plan to have been drafted to promote Colchester Council's own agenda and he was of the view that it would not be considered sound if taken forward for adoption. He suggested the plan needed to be reviewed to ensure it was consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. He referred to the identification of the town centre as the only defined retail centre and considered that the protection of the town centre should not be to the exclusion of all others. He voiced his surprise that Tollgate Village continued to be designated for employment use and there was no explanation to justify why this approach was being continued.

Brian Morgan addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the Plan relating to the Vision / Objectives / Strategy. He acknowledged that planning for future growth was challenging but that a failure to accurately assess housing need was not acceptable for any Council. He considered a bold and fresh approach had been taken by the Council which was actively working with other neighbouring Local Authorities to identify new ways to deliver infrastructure improvements in order to build communities not just houses. In his view the two best options were being recommended in the draft plan which provided the ability to create strong local communities as well as a vision to become a world class knowledge city.

Betty Constable addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to the Vision / Objectives / Strategy. She referred to the need to consider employment opportunities to sustain new housing development. She wanted to see encouragement for factories and businesses whilst being concerned about the benefits to be gained by estate agents and the likelihood of increased evictions due to problems associated with housing benefit.

Councillor Liddy attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to East Colchester. He wished to support the concern expressed by residents of Wivenhoe, particularly in relation to the impact of development on local health provision. He considered the University of Essex to be the best thing to happen to Colchester. He explained that Wivenhoe had changed over the years but that it had remained a stand-alone community which must continue to change

and develop in the future. He was of the view that the proposals for the land to the north of Clingoe Hill could create considerable benefits for residents of Colchester.

Councillor Buston attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to the East Colchester. He referred to the need for the draft plan to include improvements to infrastructure, particularly given the congestion problems experienced in Colchester and was of the view that a Colchester Southern Bypass was an essential element with improvements to the A120 and an aerial crossing of the River Colne, similar to that provided by the Orwell Bridge. This would give the benefit of transferring traffic across town as well as accessing the Knowledge Gateway.

Annesley Hardy addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to West Colchester. She referred to the proposals included in the draft plan in relation to the Essex County Hospital site. She considered these to be an improvement but sought clarification as to which option had been identified as the preference, how many residential units the site would accommodate and what their design would include. She also questioned whether a residential care home was likely to be included and whether the units would be owner occupied. She considered all these questions had implications in terms of car parking provision and was concerned about the implications for existing residents if additional pressure on parking was likely to be created.

Councillor Lilley attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to Rowhedge. He referred to Battleswick Farm, Rowhedge and explained that Rowhedge used to be a community with shipbuilding and a port, whereas now it just had housing. The Neighbourhood Plan proposals, drawn up by the Parish Council, had been unable to identify suitable land for further development. Accordingly, he had been surprised to learn that the draft plan included proposals for residential development at Battleswick which was a working farm. He was worried that this would mean the end of Rowhedge as a village. He considered the community could not take any more development as there was insufficient infrastructure and the proposals lacked sustainability.

In discussion, Members of the Committee commented, in particular, in relation to:

- The importance of preparing and maintaining an up to date Local Plan in order to prevent indiscriminate submission of applications needing to be challenged at Appeal;
- The long maintained physical barriers to development in the Borough delineated by the route of the A12 to the north, the Ministry of Defence land to the south and the Coastal Protection Belt to the east;
- The successful use of brownfield land for development and the consequential need to use greenfield locations with appropriate transport links;
- The logic of including two garden communities options for consideration, given the level of assessed future housing need, the duty to co-operate with neighbouring

authorities and the short supply of viable brownfield sites;

- The need for a protection belt to be provided in relation to Salary Brook;
- The importance of delivering infrastructure requirements such as railway and trunk road links prior to the commencement of housing development;
- The welcome inclusion of provision for travellers on the draft Plan and the need for such an allocation to be close to infrastructure and services;
- The need for future growth and the use of land outside the urban core to be acknowledged as inevitable;
- Concern regarding the yet to be finalised route of the A120, the timetable for this to be agreed and the impact this would have on any development proposed for West Tey;
- Whether the required resources would be available to the Council to deliver two garden communities at the same time;
- The need for the consultation process to be as accessible as possible for the public and other stakeholders;
- The scope of the Plan which required proposals to be prepared up to 2033 and the importance of consideration being given to the views of the younger generation;
- The importance of allowing capacity for the University to expand in the future;
- The need for the town centre to continue to be protected as the Borough's principle retail centre;
- The Council's track record over many years of working successfully within the Government's legal requirements, particularly in relation to the protection of villages and smaller communities;
- The potential for the public consultation exercise to be extended by a number of weeks, particularly in the light of the forthcoming summer holiday period when a number of Parish Councils do not have meetings;
- The securing of large scale highway improvements such as the dualling of the A120 and the link through to Clingoe Hill, were only feasible through the negotiation of large scale developments together with the associated developer contribution mechanism and the co-ordination of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership;
- The potential to use the growth generated by people living longer and the proximity of London to the Borough as an opportunity to deliver additional funding for innovative projects such as the Archaeological Park and Community Development Workers
- Disappointment that the details of the proposals regarding the land at the Rugby Club had been received by the ward councillors from the Parish Council and a request for improved communication to be set up for the future;
- Aspirations for a Southern Relief Road, together with a roundabout at the Warren Lane Maldon road junction had been identified over many years;
- The identification of 600 additional homes by Tiptree Parish Council was welcomed and, together with the two potential garden communities, highlighted the potential for some of the larger villages in the Borough to be willing to accept a greater proportion of homes than currently identified;
- Errors within the draft Plan in relation to the existence of a GP surgery, the

capacity of the local school and the future of the bus service at Birch;

- Concern regarding the omission of Marks Tey from the draft Plan due to the proposal for a nearby garden community and the negative impact of a potential for a delay in the delivery;
- Reference to an expression of interest for 15 plots to be allocated at Smythies Green, Layer Marney;
- Concern expressed by local retailers in relation to the allocation of Britannia Car park and the potential economic impact as a result of a loss of a town centre car park as well as the impact the closure of the car park would have on users of St Botolph's Church;
- The absence of any allocation in respect of smaller developments in the town centre;
- The allocation identified on land behind the Town Hall which had hitherto been used by Councillors for car parking whilst at meetings;
- The identification of a need for single storey dwelling provision in Layer de la Haye;
- Concern regarding the identification of one site allocation in Langham which the Parish Council had been unaware of despite spending a very great deal of time and effort in finalising responses to a Parish Council survey of residents on potential Langham development sites;
- The significant negative impact upon the Rowhedge community should the allocation at Battleswick Farm be approved, as well as the shortcomings of the site in relation to highway provision and loss of ecology.

In the light of the representations made, the Spatial Policy Manager gave detailed comments in relation to the following issues:

- The Objectively Assessed Housing Need would be reviewed when necessary but not solely in light of the outcome of the Referendum as she explained that need was also related to people living longer and more independently;
- A leaflet had been produced which summarised the draft plan in more user friendly language;
- The existing plans would be available at the consultation workshops, the outcomes from which would be reported back to the Local Plan Committee;
- The University of Essex would be included as part of the consultation process;
- Neighbourhood Plans continued to be important as part of the Local Plan process;
- The consultation period had already been extended from the statutory six week timescale to eight weeks;
- The new garden communities proposals would include provision for infrastructure such as new educational facilities and open space provision;
- No decision had yet been made in relation to Community Infrastructure Levy;
- The draft plan was seeking to maintain a gap between Wivenhoe and Colchester whilst also de-allocating a proposed development site to the south of Boundary Road;
- The stance adopted by other Councils in not adopting a Local Plan had led to a

situation whereby the Councils had been forced to enter into expensive appeal processes against developments over which they had no control and this was not a situation which was considered to be desirable;

- The contents of the draft plan relating to employment designations would be reviewed in the light of the outcome of the Stane Park inquiry;
- The Northern Gateway area had the benefit of an extant planning permission;
- The specifics in relation to the Essex County Hospital site would not come forward until an application for planning permission was submitted;
- The increased allocation of green-field sites was as a result of the number of brownfield sites successfully used in the past and recognition that there was so few of these remaining for consideration;
- The opportunities provided by the garden community proposals for collaborative working between both the public and the private sector;
- The importance of maintaining the most up to date Plan as possible as well as staying abreast of the progress being made by neighbouring Local Authorities and the potential for this to require additions to be made to the resources available within the Council;
- The need for the Strategic Part 1 of the draft plan to be revised to make reference to an agreed joint working arrangement for a period of a minimum of 10 years;
- The consultation exercise had been aligned with the consultations being undertaken by Braintree and Tendring Councils and, as such, had been scheduled to coincide with jointly agreed timeframes, at least in part;
- The allocation in relation to the Rugby Club land was the same as that set out in the Myland Community Council Neighbourhood Plan, following the reallocation of the ward boundaries following the election, consultation arrangements would be amended to reflect this change in representation;
- The need for the inclusion of appropriate wording within the policy relating to Colchester Zoo to address the safe access to the site from Warren Lane, Stanway;
- The continued potential for Marks Tey Neighbourhood Plan to identify potential sites for development pending the delivery of a garden community;
- It was anticipated that the errors within the draft Plan would be corrected as part of the revisions to be made following the consultation exercise and Councillors were encouraged to identify any factual or typographical errors by email where possible;
- The allocation of Britannia Car Park was a reflection of the anticipated impact of the Park and Ride facility and the reduced need for town centre parking as a consequence;
- The draft Plan had included an allocation of 500 units within the town centre to take account of various piecemeal 'windfall' gains;
- The use of the land behind the Town Hall for development was an option which had been included for appropriate consideration;
- The most pressing need in relation to travellers was for the identification of a transit site for the County as a whole;
- The number of plots identified in the draft Plan were not fixed allocations, these were still open to amendment at a later consideration by the Committee.

The Strategic Director acknowledged the challenge facing the Committee members to determine the way forward in light of the level of assessed housing need for Colchester and the Borough as a whole. He was of the view that there was not an option to deliver the development on a piecemeal basis as this would not provide for the necessary levels of infrastructure to be delivered. He explained that it was this criterion which suggested that the garden communities would provide the best option for the Council to consider as well as enabling the Council's involvement to be part of the delivery and make-up of the infrastructure. He acknowledged that the draft Plan did not yet include adequate detail to establish the nature of the infrastructure which each proposal would require but he was assured that this would be forthcoming in due course.

RESOLVED that-

- (a) Subject to amendments in relation to minimum period of Local Authority joint working, the policy relating to Colchester Zoo to address safe access requirements from Warren Lane and the effect of the Park and Ride facility on town centre parking spaces, the contents of the Preferred Options Local Plan document be agreed.
- (b) The Preferred Options Local Plan document be approved for public consultation for an amended ten week period from Saturday 9 July to Friday 16 September.
- (c) Authority be delegated to the Place Strategy Manager, following consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, to make minor revisions to the document prior to its publication.