

Local Plan Committee

14 December 2015

Item
10

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Laura Chase 01206 282473
Title	Authority Monitoring Report		
Wards affected	All		

The Local Plan Committee is asked to approve the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR)

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To approve the 2014-15 Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for publication on the Council's website.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 Until the Localism Act came into effect in April 2012, Section 35 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act required that every local planning authority (LPA) should prepare and publicise an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) containing information on the implementation of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and the extent to which the policies set out in Local Development Documents (LDDs) and local plans are being achieved. The Localism Act removed the requirement for local authorities to submit their AMR to Government, but retained a duty for local authorities to monitor policies. The Council accordingly still needs to demonstrate the effects of its policies. In view of the lighter requirements for AMRs, the Council has streamlined its reporting for this year's AMR. The report accordingly focuses on key indicators and has consolidated background information in tables, which is considered to have the advantage for users of being more concise and easier to use. Guidance now refers to monitoring reports as 'Authority Monitoring Reports' rather than 'Annual Monitoring Reports', so the report has been rebadged with this revised title.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 There are no alternatives as the Council needs to provide an annual source of information on the delivery of its planning functions.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) provides key information that helps the Borough Council and its partners to evaluate planning policies in the context of current trends and delivery levels. The full

report covering the period April 2014 to March 2015 is attached as Appendix 1 and will be available to view on the council's website www.colchester.gov.uk and upon request to the Planning Policy team.

- 4.2 As part of the Localism Act, authorities can now choose which targets and indicators to include in their monitoring reports as long as they are in line with the relevant UK and EU legislation. Their primary purpose is to share the performance and achievements of the Council's planning service with the local community. The format of this AMR accordingly is designed to clearly demonstrate how the Council is meeting targets and indicators arising from the adopted policies contained in its Local Plan and provide information that can be used in reviewing the plan. The AMR also has a wider role in helping the Council and its partners monitor the success of infrastructure delivery plans such as the Integrated County Strategy, and can also be used by other agencies wishing to amend their plans and actions. The AMR also includes information on how the Council is working with partners to meet the duty to co-operate on cross-boundary strategic matters.
- 4.3 The AMR is divided into a number of Key Themes covering progress in meeting Local Plan policy aspirations across a variety of areas. Key findings include:
- The total number of applications received between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014 was 1,548 which is a small increase on last year's total of 1,521 but is well below the pre-recession figure of 2,015 in 2007-08. 86% of minor applications were decided within 8 weeks, compared to 80% in the previous year. Performance in the 'major applications' category was up to 88% compared to 90% in the previous year and 68.6% in the year before that. This improvement reflects successes in the Council's implementation of project management measures for applications, including pre-application advice and Planning Performance Agreements which will enhance consistency and quality in processing applications. 'Other applications' also exceeded the 80% national target with 90.7% being achieved, matching the rates of the previous two years.
 - The housing trajectory included in this report shows that a net of 943 homes were built between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2015. This is an increase on the previous year's total of 725 and indicates housing delivery is recovering from the earlier recessionary period.
 - The net housing completion figures demonstrate a good performance when considered in context of the national recessionary climate and when compared to other local authorities in Essex. The table in the Overview section of the AMR providing Essex Local Authority Housing Delivery figures shows that Colchester has out-performed all other Essex authorities in recent years.

- In line with national guidance on Objectively Assessed Need, the Council will now be developing a new Local Plan based on updated evidence of housing need and viability. Initial work that will inform the Council's new Objectively Assessed Need target indicates 920 new dwellings per annum over 20 years would be required across the Borough. New housing targets will be matched with additional allocations as part of the plan-making process. It is important to bear in mind, however, that even if the Council can ensure there is an adequate supply of housing land, economic viability considerations and market conditions influence actual delivery figures.
- 259 affordable housing units were delivered during 2014-15; 248 of these were affordable rent and 11 were intermediate tenure or shared ownership. This amounts to 35.4% of all new homes delivered. The comparable figures for the previous two years were 103 (14.2%) in 2013/14 and 133 (21.6%) in 2012/13. This year's higher total reflects the completion of several affordable only schemes including Ilex Close, Hawkins Wharf and the Council's new build programme.
- Approximately 93% of new and converted dwellings were on previously developed land. This is an increase from last year's total of 84%, and equals the figure from the 2012/13 total of 93%.
- The Council worked with other districts to produce an Essex Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) to help provide an assessment of current provision and future need for pitches in the Borough (published in July 2014, with September 2014 revisions.) The GTAA established that Colchester had 12 local authority pitches at Severalls Lane, 15 private pitches, and one site where the use was tolerated and considered lawful due to the length of time it had occurred. Council monitoring established that in January 2014 there were 43 caravan/mobile units, including 17 on the Local Authority Site on Severalls Lane. The development of new policies and allocations for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople will be guided by the 2014 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment. It found that the Council will need to provide 15 further pitches to meet demand to 2033.
- The Borough has seen moderate amounts of new development over the last few years, mainly relating to industrial and storage and distribution uses (planning use classes B1(c), B2 and B8) uses and driven by a small number of large developments. At the same time, the Borough has been losing significant amounts of B class space, to the extent that net development rates have been negative in recent years. This has also been driven by a handful of large redevelopments such as the Flakt Woods development which involved the movement of the company to smaller new premises at Cuckoo Farm. This year, totals continued to be significantly affected

by the 2013 introduction of permitted development rights to change office use to residential. There has been a net loss of 10,938 square meters of employment floorspace across the Borough from planning permissions issued in the monitoring period, of which 5,269 square meters of office floorspace was permitted to change to residential use.

- While AMR figures show limited commercial activity within the Town Centre, the redevelopment of the Williams and Griffins department store and Lion Walk shops points to investor confidence in the longer term prospects of the Town Centre. Additionally, the commercial property market for existing Town Centre property is buoyant.
- The challenging issue of transportation is being tackled through a number of approaches including new transport infrastructure (i.e. the final phase of the Northern Approach Road, introduction of the Park and Ride, and improved cycle routes such as the Braiswick link to Colchester station) as well as behavioural change measures such as travel plans, which support shifts away from car-based means of transport.
- Under the Local Authority Carbon Management scheme, a target was set to reduce carbon emissions by 40% from 2008 baseline data by 2020. Target emissions reductions are currently 38% less than 2008 baseline levels, primarily because many of the more easy to implement initiatives have been implemented. The challenge now for Colchester is to develop a new carbon management plan that identifies more innovative and creative ways to continue to reduce carbon emissions by 2020, while factoring in the effects on emissions of predicted population growth in the Borough over the same period.
- The AMR shows that there was no loss/damage to Scheduled Monuments, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or (SSSIs), Local Wildlife Sites, key community facilities or loss of designated allotment sites..

5. Proposals

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Committee agree to adopt and publish the Authority Monitoring Report.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 Effective strategic planning supports the Strategic Plan Action Plan which includes a commitment to make Colchester a vibrant, prosperous, thriving and welcoming place.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 The Authority Monitoring Report considers the effectiveness of Local Plan policies which have been through a comprehensive consultation programme as set forth in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 The AMR provides a wealth of statistical information on the Borough which should warrant press attention.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications. The AMR, however, provides evidence to evaluate the effect of wider economic influences on Council planning policies and highlights the potential for the Council to benefit from Government funding linked to housing delivery.

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Development Framework and is available to view by clicking on this link:-

<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/4962/Strategic-Policy-and-Regeneration>

or go to the Colchester Borough Council website

www.colchester.gov.uk and follow the pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Strategic Policy and Regeneration and select Local Development Framework from the Strategic Planning and Research section.

- 10.2 There are no particular Human Rights implications.

11. Community Safety and Health and Safety Implications

- 11.1 None

12. Risk Management Implications

- 12.1 Monitoring policies to ensure their effectiveness is intended to reduce the risk of inappropriate development. It will provide consistent advice to landowners, developers, officers, Councillors and members of the public.

14. Disclaimer

- 14.1 The information in this report was, as far as is known, correct at the date of publication. Colchester Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any error or omission.