

14 December 2015

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Chris Outtersides
Title	Garden Settlements		☎ 07867 578548
Wards affected	All		

The Local Plan Committee is asked to note the progress made in relation to Garden Settlements.

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To note the progress made in relation to the consideration and assessment of Garden Settlements as part of the Local Plan process.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To ensure the Committee is aware of the work being undertaken to provide a robust basis for guiding sustainable future growth and development across the Borough both within the Local Plan period and potentially beyond.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 There is no alternative option; the report is for information only.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 Colchester Borough Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan to address future growth and need within the district up until 2032 and beyond. The new Local Plan is an important document which will determine the way forward for Colchester. It will provide the strategy for the growth of the Borough, setting out what development will take place and where. The intention is for the Council to publish its Preferred Options mid-2016.
- 4.2 As part of the Local Plan process, the Objectively Assessment of Need (OAN) prepared by Peter Brett Associates suggests that Council needs to allocate land for approximately 13,800 houses (920 a year) to meet housing needs up to 2032, i.e. within the next plan period.
- 4.3 To address this need, and in accordance with the Duty to Cooperate, the Council is working closely with Braintree District Council (BDC) and Tendring District Council (TDC), who are at similar stages in their respective Local Plan preparation, to plan effectively for the long term. As part of this process, the Councils (with assistance from Essex County Council) are thinking strategically, are not being restricted by current plan making time horizons and are considering whether Garden Settlements could address some of this long term need both within the plan period and beyond.
- 4.4 The Committee will recall that the Colchester Issues and Options Report published in 2015 included several growth strategy options including new settlements to the east and

west of Colchester and a possible urban extension to the north of Colchester. The Report also outlined that the Council would “*aspire for new development of any new settlement to be as sustainable and as high quality as possible*” and that “*The Town and Country Planning Association’s Garden City principles provide a useful framework for achieving this.*”

What are Garden Cities?

- 4.5 Garden Cities are described by the Town & Country Planning Association (TCPA) as “*holistically planned new settlements which enhance the natural environment and offer high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities*”
- 4.6 Garden Cities are underpinned by a set of principles. These principles have evolved from Ebenezer Howard’s original vision in 1898 which described how ‘*the advantages of the most energetic and active town life, with all the beauty and delight of the country, may be secured in perfect combination*’ and include:
- land value capture for the benefit of the community;
 - strong vision, leadership and community engagement;
 - community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets;
 - mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are affordable for ordinary people;
 - a strong local jobs offer in the Garden City itself, with a variety of employment opportunities within easy commuting distance of homes;
 - beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with gardens, combining the very best of town and country living to create healthy homes in vibrant communities;
 - generous green space linked to the wider natural environment, including a surrounding belt of countryside to prevent sprawl, well connected and biodiversity rich public parks, and a mix of public and private networks of well managed, high-quality gardens, tree-lined streets and open spaces;
 - opportunities for residents to grow their own food, including generous allotments;
 - strong local cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable neighbourhoods; and
 - integrated and accessible local transport systems with walking, cycling and public transport being the most convenient and affordable – with a series of settlements linked by rapid transport providing a full range of employment opportunities (as set out in Ebenezer Howard’s vision of the ‘Social City’ in his book – *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898)).
- 4.7 In terms of scale, the Government has indicated that Garden Cities should comprise approximately 15,000 dwellings and above, as well as associated employment, green space and infrastructure, with the expectation that it would take longer than one plan period to deliver these new communities. Additionally, there could be scope to apply Garden City Principles including land value capture to smaller settlements.

Current Position

- 4.8 Following the Issues and Options Report and the Call for Sites exercise, the Council (in conjunction with BDC and TDC) jointly appointed Garden City Developments CIC (GCD), a not for profit community interest company, to promote and establish partnerships with local landowners and option holders to investigate the feasibility of the proposed Garden

Cities. John Walker from GCD is attending the Committee meeting to assist any Committee Members who may have specific queries in terms of the Garden City approach and GCD's involvement in the process to date.

- 4.9 GCD has met Members from each Council, has held numerous meetings with key landowners, and is currently undertaking discussions with these landowners and option holders.
- 4.10 The intention of these discussions is to develop the Councils' options around applying land value capture and long term stewardship arrangements, and to specifically explore landowners' appetites for engaging with the councils on these issues and willingness to enter legally binding agreements with the respective councils to such effect.
- 4.11 Parallel to this, the Councils are also actively seeking to evolve the policy process to further endorse the emerging concepts – the result being that all three Councils may decide to identify a Garden Settlement as a broad location for growth in their Local Plan Preferred Options.
- 4.12 Should the Council decide to proceed with a Garden Settlement as part of their Preferred Options, depending on its location, dedicated Development Plan Documents would be prepared for each settlement once the principle has been agreed. This process will allow for extensive community consultation and participation very early on in the process.
- 4.13 It is noted that the consideration of new Garden Settlements is considered extremely visionary and at the forefront of current strategic planning thinking. In principle support for the proposals has already been obtained from Government and the Councils are also receiving assistance from the Major Projects Division of the Homes and Communities Agency (Atlas).
- 4.14 It is envisaged that the delivery of new Garden Settlements could assist in a commitment to a viable and committed housing trajectory across the Councils beyond the proposed Local Plan period.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 The Committee are requested to note the progress made in relation to the consideration of Garden Settlements as part of the Local Plan process.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan Action Plan includes a commitment to make Colchester a vibrant, prosperous, thriving and welcoming place. The new Local Plan will contribute to the attainment of this commitment through new development, conservation and regeneration.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 Should the Council decide to proceed with a Garden Settlement(s) as part of their Local Plan Preferred Options, this will be subject to specific public consultation in line with the statutory regulations at the appropriate time.
- 7.2 Consultation on the Local Plan, Preferred Options and any subsequent Development Plan Document will be publicised on the Colchester Borough Council website and by

press release. Notification will also be sent to people and companies on the Council's Local Plan consultation database at the start of every public consultation period.

8. Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 The Local Plan is likely to generate publicity at various stages and in particular when public consultation is underway.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 The financial implications of the Local Plan – Preferred Options are included within the budget which has been allocated for the review of the Local Plan including updating of evidence based documents, consultation and examination.

10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Plan and is available to view on the Colchester Borough Council website by following this pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Diversity and Equality > Equality Impact Assessments > Commercial Services > Local Plan.
- 10.2 There are no particular Equality, Diversity or Human Rights implications.

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 None

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 None

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 Ensuring members are fully briefed on the Local Plan review process will help reduce the risk of inappropriate development being permitted.

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 omissions.