

14 December 2015

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Sandra Scott 01206 282975
Title	Consultation Responses to the Draft Strategic Land Availability Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal / Garden Settlements Frameworks		
Wards affected	All		

The Local Plan Committee is asked to note the responses to the consultation and agree amendments to the frameworks.

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To note the summary of the consultation responses and agree the amendments to the SLAA and Sustainability Assessment Frameworks.

2. Reasons for Decision

- 2.1 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) are both statutory requirements and procedures must comply with guidance and legislation set out nationally, which includes the need to carry out consultation. Amendments have been necessary to ensure appropriate criteria is in place against which proposals for Garden Settlements can be assessed.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The feedback may not be reported which could reduce understanding and clarity in respect of framework for the SLAA and SA Assessment Frameworks.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into effect on 27th March 2012 and is a material consideration in planning decisions. It sets out the requirements for the preparation of Local Plans.
- 4.2 The Strategic Land Availability Assessment will be carried out in accordance with the National Planning Practice Guidance (<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment/>)
- 4.3 As part of the process of developing the evidence to support the production of the Local Plan, the Council must carry out a Strategic Land Availability Assessment and a Sustainability Appraisal. In order to ensure a fair and comprehensive approach and to be clear in the process of developing the Plan, Colchester Borough Council carried out a consultation on draft frameworks for these two processes, to be used in the assessment of sites being considered for allocation.

A six week consultation period for both consultations ran from Monday 27 July to 5pm on Monday 7 September.

- 4.4 The Committee considered a Report providing an overall summary of the consultation responses on 5th October 2015. This report provides a table detailing the comments, together with an officer response, highlighting any amendments proposed to the assessment frameworks as a result of the consultation responses.

Summary of responses

- 4.5 A small number of responses to the consultation were received on both these documents which is unsurprising given the technical nature of the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA). A total of 6 responses were made to the Sustainability Appraisal assessment framework which included the draft Garden Settlement assessment framework. 5 responses were made on the SLAA criteria. Of these responses there was significant overlap, with most respondents replying to both consultations. Since the Committee in October a further response has been received from Historic England commenting on the SLAA and SA frameworks.
- 4.6 A full summary of the comments received and the relevant response is provided in tables 1 and 2 in Appendix 1. General support for the criteria was expressed in some cases with points relating to matters of detail. Most of the responses raise relevant issues which are appropriate for inclusion as assessment criteria. On the whole the detailed points made refer to issues of detail which are already covered either directly or indirectly by existing criteria and the relevant evidence which will be required to assess specific proposals. The updated version of the SLAA site assessment framework is shown in Appendix 2; the framework incorporates changes made for operational reasons, as well as changes made as a result of the consultation responses received – changes resulting from the consultation are shown in underlined and strike-through text. The updated version of the Sustainability Appraisal and Garden Settlement Framework is shown in Appendix 3, with changes resulting from the consultation responses shown in underlined and strike-through text.

5.0 Proposals

- 5.1 A number of issues raised are considered to merit further consideration and could refine and improve the criteria. These minor amendments are summarised below and the tables in appendix 1 sets out the comments and response in more detail:
- Additional criteria to assess deliverability eg can this development deliver what the town needs? Is there an appropriate delivery vehicle in place?
 - Clarification in respect of reference to “publicly accessible open space” and the relevance of open space without public access;
 - Confirmation in respect of suggested additional sources of information.
 - Additional criteria related to an increase in community facilities, visual impact on the settlement and surrounding countryside and impacts on the distinctive setting of the settlement.
 - Amendment to wording in relation impacts and assessment criteria on heritage assets to provide clarity avoid ambiguity
- 5.2 The changes to the assessment criteria will be made to the SLAA assessment framework and all relevant Sustainability Appraisal Frameworks and the updated wording will be reflected in all assessments including those already subject to initial work. The

implications of the changes are limited since they primarily add clarity to exiting wording rather than raise new elements and reflect the iterative process of the SLAA assessment and Sustainability Appraisal Methodology.

6. Strategic Plan References

- 6.1 The Sustainability Appraisal is a robust assessment process to balance the social, environmental and economic considerations in planning for the future of the area. The assessment criteria for the SLAA also follows these themes against which to assess the suitability of sites for future development. As such the assessment frameworks cross over the four key themes of the Strategic Plan in promoting Colchester as Vibrant, Prosperous, Welcoming and Thriving with the intention of ensuring that the emerging Local Plan helps to achieve the objectives of the Plan.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 There is no requirement to further consult on the responses to the consultation on the SLAA / SA Frameworks.

8.0 Publicity Considerations

- 8.1 It is considered unlikely that the consultation on the SLAA / SA Frameworks will attract publicity.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no identified financial implications to the Council.

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 Development Framework.
- 10.2 There are no identified Human Rights implications.

11. Community Safety and Health and Safety Implications

- 11.1 None.

12. Risk Management Implications

- 12.1 Ensuring members are fully briefed on planning decisions and relevant policies in the Local Plan will help reduce the risk of inappropriate development being permitted.

13. Disclaimer

- 13.1 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.