

Local Plan Committee

5th July 2016

Item
7

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Karen Syrett 01206 506477
Title	Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation		
Wards affected	All		

The Local Plan Committee is asked to approve the draft Local Plan Preferred Options document for public consultation

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To agree the content of the Preferred Options Local Plan document (attached as Appendix 1 to this report).
- 1.2 To agree the Preferred Options Local Plan document is published for public consultation for an eight-week period from Saturday 9 July to Friday 2 September.
- 1.3 For the Committee to delegate authority to the Place Strategy Manager to make minor revisions to the document prior to publication.

2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To ensure the Council's planning policies are up to date in order to provide a robust basis for guiding future growth and development across the Borough.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The alternative would be to delay the next stage of plan development. However, this would leave the council in a vulnerable position going forward with no clear steer for the future growth and development of the Borough. It could result in existing policies becoming outdated; they may conflict with national policy requirements and undermine decisions made by the Planning Committee.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 **The Plan-making process:** The Council began preparation of a new Local Plan in 2014 and carried out an initial Issues and Options consultation in January/February 2015. Since then, the Committee has received reports in June and August 2015 noting the results of the Issues and Options consultation and providing progress on the development of the plan and its supporting evidence base. During this period, the Council has also invited landowners and developers to put forward potential sites for development which the Council has then

assessed for suitability. The December 2015 Committee approved an updated Local Development Scheme which set forth the timetable for Local Plan development. The April 2016 Committee considered selected draft development management policies which have now been incorporated into the full version of a Preferred Options plan, containing both allocations and policies.

- 4.2 It is now proposed to consult on this version of the plan for an eight-week period to run from 9 July to 2 September to gather views from the public and stakeholders. Braintree and Tendring Local Plan consultations are running to similar dates. The plan will then 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 is intended to be published at the end of the year, followed by a further period of consultation and submission to the Government in spring 2017 for public examination and subsequent adoption. It is likely that the strategic element of the Local Plan (Part 1) common to Braintree, Colchester and Tendring Local Plans will be examined jointly, followed by separate examinations of each Local Plan's unique policies.
- 4.3 **Duty to cooperate** - Officers and Members from Braintree, Colchester, Tendring and Essex have been working closely together during the preparation of the draft Local Plans, particularly in relation to the proposals for new garden communities. As a recognition of that work, the cross border nature of some of the allocations and when considering how the examination of the Plans would take place by the Planning Inspectorate, it is proposed to have a single joint strategic section in each Local Plan known as the North Essex Strategic Part 1. This is a series of policies and text which will be contained within the Braintree, Colchester and Tendring Local Plans and which will be identical. Work was undertaken with Chelmsford as the fourth local authority within our strategic housing market area, but as the Chelmsford Local Plan will now be published at a later date, they are not formally included within this.
- 4.4 **Evidence Base:** All parts of the plan, including both the strategic Part 1 and the Colchester specific allocations and policies in Part 2 are based on a comprehensive evidence base covering a wide range of topics including the following, carried out jointly with other authorities where required and available on the Council's website:
- Objectively Assessed Housing Need Report – July 2015
 - Strategic Housing Market Assessment – December 2015
 - Strategic Land Availability Assessment – June 2016
 - Concept Feasibility Study for Garden Communities – June 2016
 - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment – July 2014, updated October 2014
 - Employment Land Needs Assessment – January 2015
 - Colchester Retail Study – March 2013
 - Travel to Work Patterns – September 2015
 - Green Infrastructure Strategy – October 2011

- Indoor Sports Facilities and Playing Pitch Strategies – July 2015
- Water Cycle Study – June 2016
- Local Wildlife Study-
- Transport Modelling – June 2016

4.5 There will be a need to update, review and add to the evidence base as the Local Plan develops. Further works is required for example on infrastructure and the affordable housing viability report will be reviewed when there is more certainty around issues such as starter homes.

4.6 **Sustainability Appraisal:** Part of Local Plan preparation includes preparation of a Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) which assesses the environmental implications of every policy and site allocation in the Local Plan, together with all reasonable alternatives. This will be published at the same time as the draft Local Plan for consultation. The Sustainability Appraisal work reflects the analysis of potential sites for development contained in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment, including those submitted by developers and landowners through the Call for Sites. There is also a joint sustainability appraisal of Part 1 which has been prepared by Essex County Council Place Services.

4.7 **Content of the Plan – Part 1:** Part 1 of the Local Plan provides allocations and policies to be included in each of the three Local Plans prepared by Braintree, Colchester and Tendring Councils. Part 1 provides a strategic approach to the requirement for the authorities to meet the objectively assessed need for development land. It includes policies on sustainable development; overall housing and employment needs; infrastructure; place shaping; the spatial strategy; and Garden Communities. The Garden Communities policy contains a recommendation for two broad areas of search for Garden Communities to the east and west of Colchester. Garden Communities are being recommended by officers as a way of meeting need which, by being locally driven, will ensure that infrastructure, facilities and services will be put in place when they are needed and that the local authority can control how quickly land is released for housing, employment, retail and other uses. If approved, work on the potential Garden Communities in these areas will continue to be progressed, both through the draft Local Plan and through additional plans and frameworks which will be developed jointly by the relevant authorities.

4.8 **Content of the Plan – Part 2:** Part 2 provides the specific policies and allocations for Colchester Borough. This section of the plan includes allocations and policies organised by area, so that residents will be able to easily find planning information specific to their local community. This place-based approach aligns with the latest best practice put forward by the Local Plans Experts Group in their March 2016 Report to Government, Discussion Paper No. 5, which states:
“The policies and site allocations within the Plan should, where possible, be place-structured, enabling a user to quickly identify what

the Plan proposes for their geographical area of interest, and should also include a succinct vision and strategy for the main places.“

The content of part 2 is summarised in the following paragraphs.

- 4.9 Vision and Spatial Strategy: Part 2 first outlines the overall vision and Spatial Strategy for Colchester, including the aspiration that in 2033 Colchester will be 'an active and welcoming town with its rich and prestigious heritage treasured and showcased for all to enjoy'. The Spatial Strategy directs development towards the most sustainable locations and provides for supporting facilities and infrastructure to create sustainable local communities.
- 4.10 Strategic Policies: The plan includes six strategic policies to detail the spatial strategy (SG1) and to direct overall development of housing (SG2), economic development (SG3), and infrastructure (SG4). Strategic policies also include guidance and support for Neighbourhood Plans (SG5) and detail on requirements for developer contributions (SG6).
- 4.11 Policy SG1 (Colchester's Spatial Strategy) provides 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 Spatial Hierarchy focuses 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 sits above other parts of urban Colchester, including Stanway and North Colchester. Sequentially, the next tier of preferred growth includes Garden Communities covered in Part 1 which straddle boundaries with adjacent authorities and provide new greenfield sites in sustainable communities which will grow gradually, over time, extending beyond the plan period. The second tier also includes proportionate growth in existing Sustainable Settlements within the Borough, including 15 large villages and the 3 District Centres of Tiptree, West Mersea, and Wivenhoe (see list below in table following para 4.11). In the remaining Other Villages and Countryside areas of Colchester, the Council will 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 will only be permitted on an exceptional basis to preserve its rural character.
- 4.12 The Council will need to meet an Objectively Assessed Housing Need of 920 units a year over the plan period. Policy SG2 provides the allocations for different areas of the Borough to meet this need, with new development focused on the urban area of Colchester, new Garden Communities to the east and west of Colchester, as well as existing Sustainable Settlements within the borough. The number of new dwellings for each area follows on from firstly, the broad distribution established by the Spatial Strategy and secondly, the analysis of capacity, deliverability, suitability and proportionality carried out by the Council through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment and the Sustainability Appraisal. Table SG2 demonstrates that the

Council has identified a 15 year supply (14,720) plus a 5% buffer for the first 5 years (14,950).

Table SG2 details the allocations for different parts of the Borough:

Settlements and Key Development Areas		Existing commitments (2017-2033)	Estimated Minimum Housing Provision (2017-2033)	Policy Reference
Colchester Urban Area		5,308	1,718	TC3, NC4, EC3, WC4
Stanway		1,554	678	WC4
East New Settlement		0	1,250	Part 1 SP7 and SP8
West New Settlement		0	1,250	Part 1 SP7 and SP9
Sustainable Settlements	Abberton and Langenhoe	619	30	SS1-18
	Birch		15	
	Boxted		36	
	Chappel and Wakes Colne		30	
	Copford and Copford Green		120	
	Dedham		17	
	Eight Ash Green		150	
	Fordham		20	
	Great Horkesley		93	
	Great Tey		17	
	Langham		125	
	Layer de la Haye		50	
	Marks Tey		0	
	Rowhedge		60	
	Tiptree		600	
	West Bergholt		120	
	West Mersea		350	
	Wivenhoe		250	
Windfall allowance (2022-2033)			500	
Total		7,481	7,479	14,960

- 4.13 Policy SG3 provides the policy and allocations to support economic growth in the Borough. This includes allocations to address the estimated potential need for 55.8ha additional B use employment land as well as scope for further alternative economic uses in other use classes to provide flexibility in the provision of floorspace to support new jobs. The policy also sets out the Council's town centre hierarchy which ensures a sequential approach to proposals for new development of town centre uses including retail, leisure and offices. It puts Colchester Town Centre at the top, with the Rural District Centres and new Garden Community centres sharing the second tier.
- 4.14 Policy SG4 addresses the key issue of provision of infrastructure to support new development. The Council is in the process of refining an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which will accompany the Submission Local Plan to provide detail on infrastructure requirements, phasing, delivery partners and funding. The IDP will use the range of studies and information on a range of topics already contained in the Council's Evidence Base and listed in para 4.4 above and also will expand on the information on constraints and infrastructure requirements contained in the allocations listed in the Preferred Options.
- 4.15 Environmental Assets Policies: The subsequent Environmental Assets section of the plan provides four policies on the protection and enhancement of the Borough's natural environment and green infrastructure, ensuring continuing safeguarding of the Borough's countryside and coastal areas as well as the development of new green infrastructure including a Green Orbital surrounding the urban area of Colchester. These policies, with the exception of the Green Infrastructure policy, were reviewed by the Committee at its April meeting.
- 4.16 This section also includes a Climate Change Policy. Policy CC1 addresses climate change and the move to a low carbon future for Colchester. The Climate Change policy provides that the Council will plan for new development in locations and ways that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adopt the principles set out in the energy hierarchy and provide resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.
- 4.17 Place Policies: The policies and text contained within this section set forth allocations and policies for specific parts of the Borough and explain how these align with the Plan's overall spatial strategy and policy objectives. The organisation of the section reflects the plan's spatial hierarchy, meaning that allocations and policies for the Town Centre and the surrounding urban area of Colchester come first, and then are followed by allocations and policies for Garden Communities and each Sustainable Settlement (existing Rural District Centres and larger villages). All allocations include information on the particular requirements of each site and specify particular requirements that must be met before planning permission could be granted.
- 4.18 Urban Colchester policies and allocations: This section divides the urban area of Colchester into four broad geographic areas (Central,

North, East and West) in line with the place-based approach. Policy TC1 provides further guidance on the mechanisms for maintaining Colchester Town Centre's pre-eminent position. The Knowledge Gateway/University; Severalls/Northern Gateway; and Stanway have been given specific policies to address their unique strategic economic growth position within the Borough (Policies EC1, NC1 and WC1).

- 4.19 Some parts of Colchester have been a focus for regeneration and development over a number of years, with significant progress and delivery evident in some areas such as the Garrison and North Colchester. Other areas will continue to be a focus for regeneration and enhancement delivered via a range of mixed use, commercial, social and residential opportunities. These areas, including the Hythe (EC2), North Station (NC2) and the Zoo (WC3) have 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.
- 4.20 Colchester has a number of existing established Commercial Areas including the Peartree Centre, Highwoods, Turner Rise and the Cowdray Centre which serve a particular function which is important for the economy and the surrounding area. Whilst expansion of such areas is not appropriate, retention and support for their current function is considered to be important, which is reflected in a specific policy (SG5). Site allocations along with specific policy considerations for other parts of the urban area of Colchester are contained in policies NC3, EC3, WC2 and WC4.
- 4.21 Other locations policies and allocations – Policies SS1-SS18 provide allocations and guidance for the 15 large villages and 3 Rural District Centres which together are categorised as 'Sustainable Settlements'. The growth provided for in these settlements is proportionate to the size of the settlement; local landscape character; other local constraints; identified need; and the availability of infrastructure as well as suitable development sites. A generic policy is provided for smaller villages and the countryside given the limits placed on development in those areas.
- 4.22 Development Management Policies: The 25 development management policies included in the Preferred Options document are intended to provide detail guiding the development management (planning application) process. They set out how development will be managed to ensure that it contributes towards the vision and objectives, via the strategic framework put in place by the policies contained in Part 1 and those covering Sustainable Growth, Climate Change, Environmental Assets and Places in Part 2. The Committee considered 11 of these policies at its April meeting. These policies have now been revised to reflect Committee comment and are included along with a further 14 policies, 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.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Preferred Options Local Plan consultation document and associated documentation be published for consultation over the period 9 July – 2 September 2016.
- 5.2 The consultation will include public workshops for interested stakeholders at the locations listed below in the Consultation section (7.1).
- 5.3 Following this consultation stage, the Council will prepare a summary of the representations made and make any alterations to the plan arising from the consultation. A final version of the plan will be submitted to this Committee for approval prior to public consultation and submission to the Government for an Examination in Public. If found sound, the Local Plan will be adopted by the full Council.

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 and Publicity

- 7.1 Consultation on the Local Plan will be carried out in line with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement and The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Because of the significant strategic nature of the Local Plan process,

the Council will ensure a comprehensive and accessible consultation programme that reaches a wide range of stakeholders. All those on the Council's extensive database including statutory consultees, Parish Councils and neighbouring authorities will be informed of the consultation by e-mail/letter. The Council is now using consultation software which will facilitate on-line registration and comment on the plan. Drop-in workshops will be held across the Borough during the consultation period, at the following locations and dates:

Venue	Date
Town Centre – Market stalls	15 and 16 July 10-14:00
Coggeshall (CBC to send rep to Braintree event)	18 July 14:30-19:30
Dedham Assembly Rooms	4 August 16-20:00
Eight Ash Green Village Hall	18 July 16-20:00
Great Horkesley Village Hall	10 August 16-20:00
Greenstead Community Centre	30 July 10-14:00
Langham Community Centre	12 July 16-20:00
Layer de la Haye Village Hall	26 July 16-20:00
Marks Tey (Braintree to send rep to CBC event)	9 July 10-14:00
Myland Parish Hall	28 July 16-20:00
Rowhedge Village Hall	2 August 16-20:00
Stanway Village Hall	23 July 10-14:00
Wakes Colne and Chappel	19 July 16-19:00
West Mersea MICA Centre	13 July 16-20:00
Wivenhoe William Loveless Hall	21 July 16-20:00

All consultation documents will be available on the Council's website and information will also be made available via social media.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The Local Plan review will be undertaken within a budget allocated for its production, including updating of evidence documents, consultation and examination.

9. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Plan 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.
- 9.2 There are no particular Human Rights implications.

10. Community Safety Implications

10.1 None

11. Health and Safety Implications

11.1 Development of a new Local Plan will address the community safety implications of creating sustainable communities.

12. Risk Management Implications

12.1 The review of the Local Plan will help ensure that the Council's planning policies are robust and up-to-date and will help to 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 omission.