

5 October 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

1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To note the summary of the consultation responses for information.

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 could not be reported for information 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 *Summary of responses*

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.

- 4.5 A full summary of the comments received 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.

5.0 **Proposals**

- 5.1 A number of issues raised are considered to merit further consideration and could refine and improve the criteria. These are summarised below and will require further consideration and dialogue with respondents to potentially agree detailed minor amendments and to incorporate additional or revised questions;

- 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”
- 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.

- 5.2 Potential for such amendments will be considered and changes made accordingly following thorough consideration on the detail and consequential implications. Where appropriate these will be incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal and Assessment criteria which will be the subject of further consultation at later stages of the plan making process.

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 Implications

- 11.1 None.

12. Health and Safety Implications

- 12.1 None

13. Risk Management Implications

- 13.1 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.

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.

Appendices

Appendix A – *Tables 1 and 2 Summary of Consultation Responses Strategic Land Availability Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal / Garden Settlements Frameworks*

Appendix A

Summary of Responses to the Consultation on the Garden Settlement Framework and Sustainability Appraisal Assessment criteria

The consultation invited comments on the Sustainability Appraisal Site Assessment Pro-forma and the approach for the assessment of Garden Settlements. These were an addendum to the original Scoping Report. Consultees were invited to consider the following in their responses:

1. Is the range of site assessment criteria appropriate?
2. Are the sources of information used adequate to address all relevant sustainability issues?
3. Are there any additional criteria that would be appropriate to add, or that could or should replace any of the existing site assessment criteria?
4. Does the framework for the assessment of the Garden Settlements, with the inclusion of an additional sustainability objective, represent an appropriate way of assessing Garden Settlement sites?

Table 1 Sustainability Appraisal / Garden Settlement Framework

Respondent	Summary of comments
CAUSE (Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex)	<p><i>Is the range of site assessment criteria appropriate?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The criteria in the assessment is too detailed for this stage of the plan preparation; • The analysis will be fragmented rather than looking at potential area as a whole; • High level questions need to be asked first in relation to how best to make North Colchester a good place to live and deliver the right types of houses and jobs with delivery of appropriate infrastructure. <p><i>Are the sources of information used adequate to address all relevant sustainability issues?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree with the addition of 3 further documents; • The Campaign for Better Transport's 2014 Car Dependency Scorecard • Freiburg: City of Vision • The Town and Country Planning Association's "Re-imagining garden cities for the 21st century: benefits and lessons in bringing forward comprehensively planned communities", <p><i>Are there any additional criteria that would be appropriate to add, or that could or should replace any of the existing site assessment criteria?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall view is that too detailed at this stage but suggest some revisions as follows; Increase emphasis on regeneration and use of brownfield land and evidence that this has been exhausted; • Does the development meet local housing need? • Does the development allow links with other employment areas or will it stand alone? • Will it provide high skilled jobs • Additional criteria suggested to assess deliverability to cover- can this development deliver what the town needs? and is there an appropriate delivery vehicle in place? • The definition of affordable housing should also include market housing to meet all needs to ensure needs are met in the right

	<p>place with the right type of homes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport criteria to be refined to place greater emphasis on connections from development to Colchester; • Reverse questions for criteria 11 and add further point – will this development support Colchester and its growth <p><i>Does the framework for the assessment of the Garden Settlements, with the inclusion of an additional sustainability objective, represent an appropriate way of assessing Garden Settlement sites?</i></p> <p>Too detailed for assessment at this stage of the process</p>
Wivenhoe Society	<p>The Wivenhoe Society is concerned that the assessment criteria do not specifically consider the impacts on the existing road networks and that a criterion should be included to take account of the likely effects on road congestion of large scale developments of the garden settlement type. To assess such effects the Borough needs an adequate data base detailing existing traffic flows and destinations and data on the potential for improvements to the road network and traffic management.</p>
Mersea Homes	<p>Concerns expressed as follows;</p> <p>In most instances the sites will be very close to each other and scheduled for the same amount of development, the Site Assessment Framework's objectives do not separate out the choices. If you actually try to apply the 10 objectives to sites in many cases the scoring will come out too similar to give useful results.</p> <p>Consider that a much finer grain of assessment is needed and would think relevant objectives and assessment criteria should also include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Visual impact on settlement and or surrounding countryside b. Ability to fit within existing settlement pattern context c. Location in relation to delivery of community facilities [for urban sites / larger villages]. d. Offers safe access to existing community centre / facilities e. Scale of visual impact when compared with existing settlement. f. On balance which option would generate the least harm and deliver the greatest benefits. <p>In contrast our general thoughts on the outcome for the 10 questions in the proposed document would be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not helpful to distinguish which option for each settlement is the most appropriate choice. 2. In most cases option sites would all score the same 3. Ditto 4. Ditto 5. Ditto with exception of delivering open space 6. Ditto 7. Depends on appropriate design, so would be the same for all options 8. Important judgement criteria 9. Relevant 10. In most cases option sites would all score the same
Office of Road and Rail	<p>No Comments</p>
Shaun Thomas	<p>Supports the Sustainability appraisal framework with the following exception;</p> <p>The assessment criteria in respect of open space are quite clear - "Will existing open spaces be protected & new open spaces be created?" and "Would the site see a loss of open space?" These tests are consistent with ensuring the Plan is compliant with the National Planning Policy</p>

	<p>Framework, para 74</p> <p>However, the Sustainability Framework then introduces the concept of "publically" accessible open space that has no significance nor reference in either National or Local Planning Policy. I strongly suggest that the Framework is revised to use those terms that are consistent with Planning Policy ie simply "open space" or "private and public open space."</p>
Irvine Road Residents Association	<p>Supports the main criteria to be used, but concerned to know why the completely irrelevant category of 'Publicly Accessible Open Space' has been added to The Sustainability Framework.</p> <p>This concept is not valid in Local or National Planning Policy and should be removed.</p>

Summary of Responses to the consultation on the Site Assessment Framework for Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) 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. In order to ensure a fair and comprehensive approach and to be clear in the process of developing the Plan, Colchester Borough Council consulted on the draft framework to be used in the assessment of sites being considered for allocation. The responses received are summarised in the table below;

Table 2 Site Assessment Framework for Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA)

Respondent	Summary of comments
Gladman Developments	<p>Comments on the initial sieve;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> it is important when considering the issues relating to Flood Zone 3(b) that the potential for mitigation be considered when assessing sites this criteria should allow for mitigation to be provided, if necessary and practicable, to allow any site to proceed forward. with regard to the criteria regarding development boundaries we believe that this needs to be carefully assessed given the current proposals for potential new settlements, in as yet only very broad geographical locations <p>Comments on stage 2- Suitability and Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty in considering how some criteria will be assessed including; coalescence, AQMA. Consider the punitive weighting given to brownfield over greenfield sites. Weighting attributed to agricultural land classification should be carefully considered against the NPPF. Gladman consider this criteria is of limited value in assessing sites With regard to Neighbourhood Plans Gladman strongly believe that this criteria should be removed entirely from the

	<p>assessment process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek clarification and the broadening out of criteria on a number of points, including; distance to town / local centre to include small clusters of retail in smaller rural locations; clarification of what is meant by “supermarket”; and broaden sources of employment especially in rural areas. • With all the criteria in this stage, there should be the opportunity to consider mitigation options. <p>Stage 6- Outcome of Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regard to the overall assessment it is not clear from the proforma how the overall assessment will be arrived at. We would therefore consider that the proforma should be accompanied by a sheet explaining the Councils approach and the particular importance it puts on each particular criteria
Irvine Road Residents Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planning history should summarise the relevant current policies affecting that site. • At no point is there any reference to representations made in relation to the site as part of the other Local Plan consultation processes. Surely these are material to the assessment in understanding the views of constituents? This applies to Irvine Road Orchard and representations regarding alternative uses for a community orchard suggesting designation as a Local Green Space • Would suggest a site visit is required for the assessment of the Irvine Road site
Mersea Homes	<p>Stage 2 Suitability and Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is too much focus on large self-contained or urban extension schemes. Villages will unavoidably score low on many of the criteria due to 'proximity' issues. This is obviously not helpful as the I&O included villages in half of the options. • What the SLAA tests do not deal with are all the reasons why there can be positive outcomes for village development which counterbalance the normal sustainability assessment criteria. For example addressing the ageing demographic, housing for young people so they can stay close to family, thresholds for community facilities, bolstering falling school roles etc. • There need to be assessment criteria which take these matters into account i.e. what positives could come from the proposed development. • The SHLAA assessment does refer village proposals back to a SA, in which case our points made on that consultation are also relevant i.e. comparing sites which are in close proximity and

	could all score the same on the 1-10 criteria.
Office of Road and Rail	No Comment
Shaun Thomas	<p>Four comments:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the section containing the planning history should summarise the relevant current policies that affect that site. This would seem to be critical in ensuring the site assessment is made within the wider planning context. At no point is there any reference made to representations made in relation to the site as part of the other Local Plan consultation processes. Surely these are material to the assessment in understanding the views of constituents. in the case of the case of Irvine Road Orchard, I am aware that a number of responses were made to the call for sites, identifying potential alternative uses such as a community orchard and indeed suggesting designation as Local Green Space. Would suggest a site visit is required for the assessment of the Irvine Road site