

6 November 2017

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Title	Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community Issues and Options consultation		
Wards affected	All wards		

**The Local Plan Committee is asked to approve the draft Issues and Options consultation document for public consultation.**

## 1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 To agree to the publication of the Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community Issues and Options consultation document (attached as Appendix 1 to this Report) for publication and consultation over an eight week period from 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017 to 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018.
- 1.2 To agree to publish the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment for consultation.
- 1.3 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 Local Plan commitment of delivering a Garden Community at Colchester Braintree Borders is planned in a consultative manner, taking account of the views of all interested parties at an early stage in its planning. The Issues and Options consultation forms the first stage of the planning process towards a Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community Plan, which once adopted will provide an informed and robust basis for guiding future development in the cross-boundary Garden Community as well as meeting the Council's Duty to Cooperate with Braintree District Council.

## 3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 An alternative option would be to not proceed with this first stage of consultation for the preparation of the Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community Plan. However, this option would be contrary to the Council's Submission Local Plan and would leave the Council out of alignment with the strategic planning programme agreed with Braintree District Council (and Tendring District Council as part of the wider programme). This could result in the Council finding itself in a vulnerable position without a long term strategic planning approach not only in respect of the Garden Community but across the Borough.

## 4. Supporting Information

### Background

- 4.1 The principle of development of the Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community (CBBGC) is identified in the joint strategic Section One of Tendring District, Colchester Borough and Braintree District Councils' Submission Local Plans. Local Plan Policy SP9

specifically refers to development of a Garden Community at Colchester Braintree Borders and requires that a Strategic Growth Development Plan Document (DPD) is prepared to guide its delivery. The emerging CBBGC Plan which is subject to the Issues and Options consultation will be the Strategic Growth DPD referred to in the Local Plan.

- 4.2 The emerging Local Plans for Braintree District and Colchester Borough are now at submission stage and will be examined early next year by an independent Planning Inspector appointed by the Government. The carrying out of an Issues and Options consultation on the planning of the Garden Community prior to the Local Plan examination serves to demonstrate progress on the Section One proposals whilst at the same time providing the Councils with an opportunity to carry out an additional, early stage of consultation with local communities and stakeholders.
- 4.3 The preparation of the CBBGC Plan will follow a similar process to that of the Local Plan; there will be distinct stages accompanied by public consultation. The Issues and Options stage is the first of these stages which will be followed by a Preferred Options stage and finally a Publication stage prior to the CBBGC Plan's independent examination and eventual adoption. In addition to each stage of public consultation, local communities affected by the proposals will be proactively engaged to ensure their views are fed back into proposals as well as ensuring they are kept abreast of the Plan's progress. The Councils have commissioned independent Community Enablers to facilitate this additional layer of engagement.
- 4.4 Once adopted, the CBBGC Plan will provide the strategies, policies and proposals required to guide the delivery of the Garden Community. It will set out a shared Vision for the new community and a strategy for its delivery. It will also set out a range of development objectives that will help deliver this Vision, and more detailed planning policies that will guide future proposals and secure timely delivery of development and infrastructure in the short, medium and long term. Importantly, the CBBGC Plan will be prepared in accordance with the relevant emerging Local Plan policies as well as the North Essex Garden Communities Charter.

#### The Purpose of the Issues and Options Consultation

- 4.5 As mentioned, the Issues and Options consultation is the first stage in the detailed planning of the Garden Community. An important part of the consultation will be forming a distinct Vision for the Garden Community which can encapsulate the ambition of the Councils whilst reconciling the views of local communities and stakeholders, effectively providing a mandate for the Garden Community's future development. The Vision needs to be a shared view that governs all processes from design through to delivery of the development and management of community assets.
- 4.6 Another purpose of the consultation is to summarise the existing evidence base (much of which was produced to inform Section One of the Local Plan) and from this baseline set out emerging strategies which have been prepared to respond to numerous issues that planning the Garden Community involves. At this stage much of the planning approach across the Garden Communities is similar, reflecting a similar baseline evidence, however as consultation and stakeholder discussions progress, these strategies will become more refined and specific to each settlement.

#### The Councils and North Essex Garden Communities Ltd

- 4.7 The consultation document explains that the Garden Communities are being overseen both by the strategic planning partnership agreed between Colchester Borough Council,

Braintree District Council, Tendring District Council and Essex County Council, as well as North Essex Garden Communities Ltd (NEGC Ltd). NEGC Ltd is jointly owned by the four Councils to drive the delivery of the three Garden Communities and secure investment in enabling infrastructure across the wider area. Through NEGC Ltd, the Councils will act as the 'lead developer', and so would not only have more control over the type of development, the design and the rate of delivery but also the ability to commit to an 'infrastructure first' approach. Such an approach will ensure that transport improvements (including new roads), schools, health and leisure facilities are developed ahead of or alongside new housing, to adequately serve the needs of the new community and to minimise any adverse impacts on existing communities. Similarly, this innovative delivery approach will also give the Councils a key role in attracting investment and businesses to assist in the creation of vibrant, thriving and sustainable communities.

### The Consultation Approach

- 4.8 A key part of the evidence base which underpins the Issues and Options consultation document is the North Essex Garden Communities Charter. This Charter was produced to articulate the Councils' aspirations for the Garden Communities and has been directly informed by the Town and Country Association's (TCPA's) Garden City Principles. The Charter comprises ten Principles based around three Themes, as follows:

#### Theme 1: Place and Integration

- Green Infrastructure
- Integrated and Sustainable Transport
- Employment Opportunity
- Living Environment
- Smart and Sustainable Living
- Good Design

#### Theme 2: Community

- Community Engagement
- Active Local Stewardship

#### Theme 3: Delivery

- Strong Corporate and Political Public Leadership
- Innovative Delivery Structure

The intention is for the North Essex Garden Communities Charter to be embedded into every stage of the planning and delivery of the Garden Communities, providing a set of Principles against which strategies, policies and proposals can be monitored against. Accordingly the Charter provides the framework for the Issues and Options consultation document.

- 4.9 The Issues and Options document sets out the emerging strategies and approaches to how the Councils will realise each of the Charter Principles at Colchester Braintree Borders and invites consultees to respond to these emerging strategies and approaches. Each Principle is accompanied by a 'Have Your Say' section which poses a question and suggests some factors which consultees may wish to consider in their response. These questions are intentionally broad, reflecting the early stage of the Garden Community's planning and thus ensuring that all views, however divergent, are considered before the CBBGC Plan can proceed to the next stage.

## The Concept Framework

- 4.10 The development potential of CBBGC has been explored in a Concept Framework study which has been published as part of the evidence base. This study looked at the area of search identified in the Local Plan for the Garden Community, suggesting the distribution and location of land uses and associated infrastructure that could be accommodated to meet the aspirations of the North Essex Garden Communities Charter as well as emerging Local Plan policies.
- 4.11 The Concept Framework identifies an overall capacity within the Garden Community for up to 24,000 homes with the following key attributes:
- Distinct development parcels each with its own characteristics and each with a particular role to play in the new community as a whole. Each of these 'neighbourhoods' is serviced by essential community infrastructure, all within walking distance, including educational establishments, local shops, public transport services, employment opportunities and recreational facilities.
  - Green buffers that provide visual and physical separation between new development and existing communities; establishing an attractive landscape setting for the new development; providing space for functions such as storm water management; and creating opportunities for formal and informal recreation, including enhanced cycle and footway links to surrounding settlements.
  - Rerouting of the A120 to a new alignment between Braintree and Marks Tey, removing strategic through-traffic from passing through the centre of Marks Tey and thereby improving the living environment and cohesiveness of the existing community.
  - Rerouting of the A12 between Feering and east of Junction 25 to a new alignment to the south of the Garden Community.
  - An opportunity to relocate the railway station to increase capacity and frequency of services.
  - New employment areas between the railway and the old A12 alignment, and separately close to the new junctions on the A12 and A120.
  - Five large new residential neighbourhoods around a new Town Centre, separated by broad green corridors connecting to open countryside.
  - Sites for up to nine new primary schools and three new secondary schools.
  - Sites for future health provision to service the needs of the future settlement.
  - A rapid transit public transport spine through the centre of the Garden Community connecting a new Park and Ride site near the A12, new employment areas, the new Town Centre and the settlements local centres with Colchester, Sudbury, Braintree and the wider north Essex area.
  - Generous amounts of accessible green spaces and landscaping, providing opportunities for recreation as well as creating a distinctive, verdant townscape.
- 4.12 The key findings of the Concept Framework study have been presented in the consultation document to gauge stakeholder feedback on the spatial aspects of the Garden Community. Whilst the Concept Framework was produced in consultation with local communities, this affords the first opportunity for the wider public to comment on the location and distribution of land uses in the new settlement. Within the document consultees are asked their opinion on what is perceived to work well in the Concept Framework and also what perhaps does not work as well. As with the development of the emerging strategies for the Garden Community, the spatial approach presented in the Concept Framework is included as part of the consultation to provoke discussion and will be refined as the CBBGC Plan progresses.

## The Next Stage

- 4.13 Following the close of the Issues and Options consultation, the Councils will collate, analyse and review all of the responses received. In combination with ongoing community engagement and stakeholder liaison, the consultation responses will play a key role in shaping the next stage of the CBBGC Plan. This stage will be the 'Preferred Options' which will set out the Councils' preferred strategies and approaches to addressing the planning issues at Colchester Braintree Borders in the form of a draft Plan. The Preferred Options will be subject to formal public consultation which is anticipated to take place in Summer 2018.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal

- 4.14 The Issues and Options consultation document should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which provide a high-level evaluation of options that consider potential social, economic and environmental impacts of the emerging CBBGC Plan. The SEA/SA will also be subject to consultation and will be available to view and comment on alongside the Issues and Options consultation document. The SEA/SA document is appended to this Committee Report.

## **5. Proposals**

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Issues and Options consultation document and associated documentation be published for consultation over the eight week period between 13th November 2017 and 8th January 2018.
- 5.2 The consultation will include a range of measures to encourage engagement including an online consultation portal where stakeholders can respond to the questions posed in the consultation document. Additionally local exhibitions will be held at the following locations (venues subject to confirmation):
- Marks Tey Village Hall
  - Great Tey Village Hall
  - Colchester Market
  - Easthorpe Church Hall
  - Coggeshall Village Hall
  - Greenstead Community Centre
  - Elmstead, Marketfield School
  - Wivenhoe, William Loveless Hall
  - Rayne Village Hall
  - Stebbing Village Hall
  - The Salings Millennium Village Hall (Great Saling)
- 5.3 Following this consultation stage, the Council will carry out further engagement and consultation to inform future stages of the CBBGC plan. An indication of the timescales involved for each stage of the planning process of the CBBGC Plan can be found in the Local Development Scheme (LDS), available on the Council's website.

## **6. Strategic Plan References**

- 6.1 The 2015 to 2018 Strategic Plan sets out a commitment for Colchester Borough to be Vibrant, Prosperous and Thriving. Effective strategic planning can help achieve all of these objectives.

## **7. Consultation**

- 7.1 Public consultation is a fundamental part of preparing the CBBGC Plan and it is recognised that early and meaningful engagement with stakeholders is important to not only ensure that the Garden Community is a successful place to live, work and visit, but that it is also locally-led, accountable and transparent in its planning.
- 7.2 Consultation on the CBBGC Plan is guided by the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), which is available on the Council's website.

## **8. Publicity Considerations**

- 8.1 The Issues and Options consultation is likely to create a high level of publicity and will therefore need to be supplemented with a communications strategy including press releases and other publicity measures.

## **9. Financial Implications**

- 9.1 None specifically relating to this report.

## **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 on the Colchester Borough Council website by following this pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Commercial Services > Local Plan.

## **11. Community Safety Implications**

- 11.1 Preparation of the CBBGC Plan will address the community safety implications of creating sustainable communities.

## **12. Health and Safety Implications**

- 12.1 Development of the CBBGC will address the health and well-being implications of creating sustainable communities.

## **13. Risk Management Implications**

- 13.1 The preparation of the CBBGC will directly assist in the effective delivery of the emerging Local Plan.

## **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.