

Local Plan Committee

Monday, 07 November 2016

Attendees: Councillor Nick Barlow, Councillor Nigel Chapman, Councillor Nick Cope, Councillor Andrew Ellis, Councillor Adam Fox, Councillor Martin Goss, Councillor John Jowers, Councillor Sue Lissimore, Councillor Gerard Oxford, Councillor Martyn Warnes

Substitutes:

86 Minutes of 5 July 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2016 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to amendments to the declarations of interest recorded in relation to minute no 78 to more accurately reflect Councillor Arnold's position as the Honorary Treasurer of Colchester Symphony Orchestra and Councillor Warnes' spouse's relatives' land ownership south of Berechurch Hall Road, Colchester.

87 Minutes of 15 August 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 August 2016 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to the reference in minute no 83 to rural exception sites in East Mersea being amended to rural exception sites in Layer de la Haye.

88 Housing Numbers

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services giving details of the most up to date evidence in relation to housing numbers which supported the targets being used in the emerging Local Plan.

Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager presented the report and responded to Councillors questions. Karen explained that prior to 2010, the housing targets used in local plans or the local development framework, had been informed by regional or county wide plans such as the Essex Structure Plan and the East of England Regional Plan. However, Regional Spatial Strategies had been abolished and the determination of housing numbers was instead now based on robust evidence established by each local authority, in line with Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMAs) and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments. The Government also indicated its intention to introduce new legislation on planning.

The Council's existing Core Strategy was based on housing numbers contained in the now revoked Regional Plan but the evidence base had been regularly updated to ensure it remained fit for purpose and annual targets had been adjusted to ensure a robust five year supply was retained

More recently, the emerging Local Plan had incorporated a housing target of 920 units a year, reflecting a comprehensive evidence base including:

- SHMAs for Chelmsford, Colchester and Braintree were prepared as part of a joint project also including Maldon and Brentwood and finalised in the summer of 2014;
- Objectively Assessed Housing Need Study produced in July 2015 for Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester and Tendring Councils;
- Review of the SHMA work in Chelmsford, Colchester, Braintree and Tendring to bring it into compliance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Policy Guidance - HDH Planning and Development Ltd, December 2015;
- Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) Update October 2016.

With the completion of the OAN update in October 2016, Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester and Tendring Councils considered they had a comprehensive evidence base to address national guidance requirements for Local Plans. The report included a table summarising the updated analysis for the three districts of Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester and comparing the results with those of the 2015 study. The report included an explanation of the analysis results which followed the stages of the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) calculation. For the three districts together, the total OAN was 2,441 dwellings per year (dpa) which was within 5% of the 2,540 dpa calculated in the 2015 study. Whilst for Colchester itself the updated OAN remained unchanged at 920 dpa.

The report went on to address the argument for housing targets to be revised following the EU Referendum in June referring to various indicators including the 300,000 new homes a year needed just to meet existing demand as identified by the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, the House of Commons briefing paper 'Brexit: impact across policy areas' which stated that it was still very unclear what kind of future relationship the UK might have with the EU and EEA/Swiss states after leaving the EU and the uncertain impact of leaving the EU on immigration policy and the immigration rights of British and EU/EEA citizens, concluding that currently the need for new housing in Colchester was unlikely to change significantly in the plan period.

In addition, recent Government statements were identified including facilitating the neighbourhood planning process, putting pressure on developers to speed up delivery, radically increasing brownfield development and the publication of a new housing white paper expected later in the year. The Financial Times' interview with Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government referred to his warning that he would "be very tough" with councils that failed to identify enough land for housing and the stated deadline of early 2017, by when councils must have completed Local Plans in place.

Amendments to the Neighbourhood Planning Bill referred to two or more local planning authorities being required to prepare a joint development plan document and also county councils being invited to prepare or revise a development plan document in cases where district councils were considered to be failing to prepare adequately.

Also included were details of a report by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners 'Positive Preparations, A Review of Housing Targets and Local Plans which reviewed 109 local plans submitted or examined since the NPPF had been introduced and confirmed that housing targets were the key issue at examination and the main reason plans were stalled with a third of plans needing to increase the housing target in order to pass examination. The report supported the view that for both plan-making and decision-taking, it was imperative that local authorities adequately assessed and identified a deliverable supply of housing land. It was also clear that adoption of an up-to-date plan, based on evidence, including a SHMA and making adequate provision for the area's housing need, offered greater protection to councils in an appeal situation.

Finally examples were provided from Castle Point, Uttlesford and Tendring giving details of the implication of not meeting an OAN.

Councillor Chillingworth attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He explained that he was speaking on behalf of residents in the Rural North ward and welcomed confirmation that a meeting had been arranged between officers and representatives from the Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex (CAUSE). He considered this would be a valuable opportunity to exchange information which would be relevant for Colchester, Braintree and Tendring councils. He voiced his concerns that the basis of the report on housing numbers was being called into question as this could jeopardise the timetable for the approval of the Local Plan. He referred to the West Colchester Garden Community proposals and queried whether they were deliverable within the proposed timescales, particularly given the current exploration by Essex County Council of options for the re-routing of the A120. He was aware that no funding had yet been committed to the road scheme and was concerned that there was therefore no certainty that the necessary highway infrastructure would be in place. He questioned the view that the West Colchester proposal, with the introduction of a new railway station, would provide a sustainable opportunity and sought clarification regarding the detail of the rail transport proposals and timescale. He was also concerned about the housing numbers being suggested and considered that the proposals were premature.

The Place Strategy Manager was of the view that it was not necessary for the evidence base to be amended given that it had been tested at appeal and could therefore be considered to be robust. In terms of deliverability, she explained that the phasing proposed for the West Colchester development suggested its development at the later stages of the Plan period with only a small number of houses due to be delivered within the lifetime of the Plan. She also confirmed that separate development plans would be

produced for each of the proposed Garden Communities. There were various options in relation to transport improvements, including higher capacity trains, improvements to tracks, upgraded train fleet and faster timetables, all of which would need to be considered by the Government.

Members of the Committee commented, in particular, in relation to the previously lowered Objectively Assessed Need targets and the potential consequences if the target was lowered still further and the robustness of the Local Plan was called into question.

RESOLVED that the updates to the Objectively Assessed Housing Need Study and other relevant commentary be noted.

89 Local Plan Preferred Options - Consultation Responses

Councillor Jowers (in respect of his membership of Essex County Council's Development Regulation Committee, Anglian (Eastern) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and the Regional Planning Panel) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Councillor Lissimore (in respect of her membership of Essex County Council's Development Regulation Committee and her responsibility as Essex County Council's Deputy Cabinet member for Lifelong Learning) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Councillor Warnes (in respect of his spouse's ownership of property in the vicinity of the Abberton and Langenhoe housing sites) declared a pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

Councillor Warnes (in respect of his spouse's relatives' ownership of property in the vicinity of the site south of Berechurch Hall Road) declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(5).

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services giving details of the representations received following a public consultation on the Colchester Local Plan Preferred Options.

Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager presented the report and responded to Councillors questions. She explained that work on the Council's new Local Plan began in 2014 and involved an initial Issues and Options consultation. Landowners and developers were invited to put forward potential sites for development on two occasions which the Council had then assessed for suitability. An updated Local Development

Scheme was approved which set forth the timetable (subsequently amended) for Local Plan development. Selected draft development management policies were considered by the Committee in April 2016 and were incorporated into the full version of a Preferred Options Local Plan, containing both allocations and policies. Consultation on the Preferred Options document was then carried out from 9 July to 16 September 2016.

The consultation process involved publishing the document and supporting information on the website, notification of the consultation to the Council's extensive list of interested organisations and individuals, and a series of public drop-in sessions which were advertised through social media, press coverage, and posters circulated.

At the drop-in sessions, attendees were provided with background information on the Local Plan process, copies of the consultation document, opportunities to ask questions of the officers in attendance, and information on how to respond more formally to the consultation, including advice on using the consultation portal. Officers also attended a number of public meetings.

The consultation attracted 2,995 representations from 1,482 respondents although ongoing checking was still taking place to ensure all representations were logged and that there was no duplication. At the time of writing the report approximately 62.2% of the representations had been received by the on-line consultation portal, 27.5% had been received by email and 10.2% had been in writing. The report included a numerical summary of the number of responses received on each part of the plan with key issues being drawn out in an Appendix. Five petitions with corresponding signatures had also been received relating to East Colchester (733), CAUSE (8,482), Dedham 168), Langham (267) and Rowhedge (143).

The Place Strategy Manager further reported two omissions from the representations summary which had been identified since the report had been published. These were in relation to sites in Stanway from Andrew Martin Associates on behalf of R F West and in relation to a site in Queensbury Avenue, Copford.

John Akker, Chairman of Stop 350, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that he was the Chairman of Stop 350, representing 900 residents of Mersea Island. He wished to object to the identification of the caravan sites within the Options document. He was of the view that the concerns of the Group weren't being listened to and that the proposals were flawed. He considered that the proposals had been drawn up by people who were not familiar with Colchester who had not been presented with the full picture. The population of Mersea Island doubled in the summer months as a result of temporary residencies and tourists and the fishing industry needed to be taken into account. He referred to a public meeting which had drawn 600 people but had not been attended by officers of the council. He considered that Mersea had been discouraged from formulating a Neighbourhood Plan but that this advice had been detrimental to the future of that community. He also referred to representations submitted by Honorary Alderman

Richard Wheeler which had not been recorded and objected to submissions being summarising to the extent that they had lost their meaning and emphasis.

William Sunnocks, on behalf of Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex (CAUSE), addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He acknowledged the importance of the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) exercises but was concerned that some of the supporting information was not available on the Council's website. He was of the view that Braintree and Tendring councils had the ability to adopt lower OAN targets and that only one garden community should be planned. He did not consider it appropriate to commence planning for a West Colchester Garden Community until the road network routes had been determined. He challenged the views expressed in the report in relation to the economy and jobs on the basis that Braintree, Colchester and Tendring were all net exporters of labour and was of the view that the three districts' overall OAN target needed to be reduced by 841 per year.

Rosie Pearson, on behalf of Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex (CAUSE), addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). She was concerned that the responses submitted to the consultation had been amended and some had been omitted from the committee report. She considered that the decisions had already been taken and that the report would merely be accepted as a done deal. She was of the view that the residents views were not being listened to and concerns about major growth associated with the West Colchester Garden Community proposals being in the wrong location were being ignored. She urged the committee to relinquish its plans at the present time, bearing in mind the meeting which was taking place between officers and members of CAUSE.

Sir Bob Russell addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that he had attended the Tendring District Council Local Plan Committee last week and he welcomed the efforts that they had made to prevent urban sprawl in East Colchester. He referred to the concerns which had been expressed in relation to the potential growth to the east of Colchester and the expansion planned to the University of Essex and the removal of the proposals which were located in Tendring District in order to retain a green buffer and to safeguard the countryside. He recollected the decisions taken by Colchester Borough Councillors against officers' advice to protect the Southern Slopes of Highwoods Country Park from development. He advocated a similar approach to the current committee members, suggesting they opt to determine the boundaries of the Salary Brook Country Park prior to the approval of the development proposals.

Councillor T. Young attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He explained his role as Portfolio Holder with responsibility for the Local Plan. He was of the view that the Garden Community proposals to the East and West of Colchester needed to be looked at in the context of the need for the Borough to find 920 houses per year for the foreseeable future. He agreed with the desirability of retaining

green links between development and for wildlife to be safeguarded. However, he was of the view that the progression of a Garden Community for East Colchester was very important given the need for a robust Local Plan as a means to resist the aspirations of developers in the area and to protect the Borough from speculative planning applications. He acknowledged the concerns in relation to development in East Colchester but he was of the view that it needed to proceed.

Councillor Lilley attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the report relating to Battleswick Farm. He explained that matters had progressed in relation to the identification of farmland buildings on the site and in relation to an alternative development site which had been submitted by the Rowhedge Business Partners. He acknowledged the need to provide for additional housing for the benefit of the people of Colchester and he was of the view that the alternative proposal provided an opportunity for Rowhedge to remain as a village and to build a facility for the community.

Councillor Cory attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He explained that he was making representations for the residents of Wivenhoe in opposition to the development in East Colchester. He acknowledged that concerns identified by residents had been addressed in the report but he remained of the view that the development would have significant environmental consequences and measures needed to be put in place to reduce the impact on the surrounding settlements. He referred to the need for a logical solution to deliver adequate transport links and for these solutions to be identified before the development went ahead. He was strongly of the view that the environmental impact and sustainability must be balanced and that the carbon footprint needed to be reduced. He continued to be concerned about the spread of urban development and the implications of a joint development involving Tendring District Council.

Councillor Arnold attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He sought the agreement to an amendment to the reference in the Preferred Options document relating to Great Horkesley in order to accommodate a matter raised by a number of local residents. He was of the view that the reference to the enlargement of the Great Horkesley Village Hall would be more usefully changed to 'enhancing community buildings' whilst the provision of allotments and a scout headquarters with public access could also usefully be included as the principal public benefits to be achieved from allowing more development in Great Horkesley. He also referred to four further issues relating to the Essex Way, woodland being designated as public open space, walking on the A134 and allowing access to public facilities on Ivy Lodge Road but acknowledged that these could be addressed at a later stage in the Plan process. He further referred to the need for the delivery of a secondary school to serve the Great Horkesley community and for this to be acknowledged as a matter which needed to be resolved.

Mel Burley, on behalf of Stop 350, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). She referred to the 300 static and over 400 mobile caravans as well as houseboats already in Mersea. She explained that many continued to be occupied in the winter months and that the Plan needed to take account of this.

Chris Anglos, on behalf of Stop 350, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He was of the view that the number of objections to the consultation was inaccurate as he was aware that people had been unable to navigate the website and were unable to complete their representation online. He considered that the council was unwilling to listen to older residents but that their views needed to be taken seriously. He mentioned the view that housing in Colchester was being allocated to residents from the London Boroughs rather than to local people.

David Broise, on behalf of Stop 350, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He was concerned at the scale of development of Mersea. He stated that 30 years ago there were 1,000 dwellings and 2,360 people living on the island whilst currently there were 3,200 dwellings with around 8,000 residents. He was also concerned at the increase in housing across the Borough and was of the view that it was not appropriate for Colchester to assume responsibility to house residents from London Boroughs.

Sarah Shehadeh, on behalf of Mersea Island Society, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). She referred to the road infrastructure on and leading to Mersea Island. In particular she considered the Strood to be a bottle neck and its deep ditches had caused road traffic incidents over the years, particularly in the winter months. She cited the incident recently involving a low loader carrying a steam engine and a bus which had led to personal injuries. She was of the view that if development was to take place the road network needed to be widened but that this would create a race track for road users. She was also concerned about the increased numbers of visitors to the Island in the summer months and was concerned about the 40 mph limits currently applied to many of the roads.

Stephen Vince, on behalf of Stop 350, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that he was a former West Mersea Town Councillor when the previous Local Plan process had been undertaken. At that time no development was suggested for Mersea on the grounds that the road infrastructure was very poor and there were no brownfield sites for development. He accepted that some development would now be expected but assumed that this would be in the order of 175 dwellings whereas the current proposal for 350 would deliver development with significantly high density which would not be appropriate.

Tony Ellis, on behalf of Langham Parish Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that he was representing the views of Langham Parish Council. He referred to Option 3, development north of the A12, which had not been included as a preferred option and the principle of no development north of the A12 which had been agreed by the Committee. He was of the view that the development proposed for Langham was grossly out of proportion for the community as it represented a 30% increase compared to a proposed increase of 2% for Dedham. He explained that the accurate number of dwellings was currently 419 not 660 and he explained the need for adequate waste water treatment for any new development and that the village had recently suffered from an episode of flooding. He also made reference to the proximity of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the petition, signed by 267 residents together with large number of individual objections, the very narrow and hazardous road network and that other locations were likely to be considerably more sustainable.

Ian Crossley, on behalf of Stop 350, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to the growth in housing number proposed for Mersea but considered this lacked a corresponding number of new job opportunities.

Christopher Lee addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to the Salary Brook Country Park which was considered to be a valuable green wedge on the boundary of Greenstead and Longridge. He was concerned regarding the extent of the green wedge and considered the width of 1.5 km which had been advocated by ward councillors needed to be confirmed and the boundary of the proposed Country Park to be drawn up to provide certainty to the residents.

Graham Willmott addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He was not so much concerned regarding the proposed introduction of 350 new dwellings for Mersea Island but was of the view that the proposal lacked information in respect of jobs, schools, bus links, roads, doctor's surgeries and sewage treatment.

Paul Knappett, on behalf of Stop 350, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). In respect of the proposed development of houses on Mersea Island, he referred to the need for the adequate sewage treatment and sea water quality to be protected. He was concerned about the capacity of GP surgeries and local schools to accommodate additional residents and sought assurances regarding the capacity of roads such as Dawes Lane to cope with additional traffic numbers.

David McMullen, on behalf of Stop 350, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He referred to the issue of local

housing being allocated to residents from London Boroughs as well as potential problems associated with vandalism and nuisance.

Mark Goacher, on behalf of the Green Party, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He considered that the Garden Community initiative needed to be referred to as a New Town initiative. He sought assurances that developers would not be in a position to acquire piecemeal planning application approvals on green field sites as a consequence of the Council's intention to deliver these types of new communities. He was also concerned about the local hospital which was already not able to cope with current demand and asked whether representatives from the NHS would be involved in the plans for the developments. He referred to plans for the widening of the A12 and the A120 but considered these alone would not be sufficient to resolve the anticipated traffic congestion. He was of the view that new housing needed to be built in accordance with standards fit for the next generation, he mentioned concern regarding housing for people moving out of London and considered it imperative that access would be provided from new developments to areas of green space.

Colin Tuckwell addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that he had a background in strategic management. He acknowledged the complexity of the document and the associated implications in planning terms. He acknowledged that it was important to embrace progress and he was of the view that Colchester had a number of capabilities which had yet to be accounted for. These were in terms of economic development opportunities, the changing role of local government, Smart Cities and the role for the Borough, the weakness of heavily understated infrastructure planning and the need for the development or publication of an implementation plan.

Alan Walker, on behalf of Marks Tey Parish Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3). He explained that he was representing the views of Marks Tey Parish Council. The Parish Council supported the principle of Garden Communities but considered that they needed to be done brilliantly. Marks Tey was the community most affected by the proposal. He considered that this aspect had not been addressed in the Options documents and that this was blatantly unfair on the residents of Marks Tey. He also considered that the Garden Communities concept was the biggest thing to impact on Colchester for a considerable time and it was of national significance. He considered that there were political risks attached to the proposals whilst that the Council was not well known for political co-operation but that a commitment was required in order to see the proposals through to successful implementation. He speculated that there may be a danger in the Council being seen as over confident and that there were improvements which needed to be made to give confidence to residents about the stated outcomes. He urged the Council to do its residents proud and to make something seen to be brilliant by the residents of Colchester.

The Place Strategy Manager responded to the comments made as follows:

- She did not consider that West Mersea Town Council had been discouraged from preparing a Neighbourhood Plan but that there were issues to be considered for parishes both in support and against the undertaking;
- She confirmed that the housing evidence was considered to be robust, the background work from Peter Brett would be made available on the website and the employment land and retail study information was in the process of being updated;
- She confirmed that development at Salary Brook was definitely not considered acceptable;
- The alternative site at Rowhedge would be included for consideration whilst the planning application in respect of Battleswick farm had now been submitted;
- She confirmed that housing sites were required to be deliverable in the first five years of the Plan, specific developable sites or broad locations for years 6 to 10 and, if possible for years 11 to 15;
- She confirmed that the two amendments suggested by Councillor Arnold for Great Horkesley could be accommodated;
- Regarding caravan parks on Mersea Island, she was aware of two families registered at the local school and 65 people registered at the doctor's surgery;
- She confirmed the attendance of officers at public meetings to assist with the discussions and representations and that the consultation period had been extended to 10 weeks in order to allow more time for responses to be submitted;
- Discussions were taking place with Essex County Council on the Plan in relation to highways issues;
- She confirmed that for the previous Local Plan process no sites had been allocated in the village areas, with sites predominantly being concentrated in the available brown field locations, but this approach could not be continued due to the brown field options no longer being available;
- In respect of Langham, the Environment Agency had confirmed that sufficient capacity could be secured for waste water and sewage treatment in the light of residential future development. She also confirmed that 85 houses had been considered appropriate but that Langham Parish Council had sought a reduction to something in the order of 50;
- The detail in relation to the boundaries of the Garden Communities would form part of separate pieces of work;
- People from London Councils would not be allocated housing as they would not meet the local connection test;
- She confirmed that Marks Tey was likely to be the community most affected by the Garden Community proposals and, in order to consider these types of concerns, separate plans were being prepared to provide more detail and to enable people to comment further.

Members of the Committee discussed the issues raised at length and, in particular, comments were made, as follows:

- The need to ensure the total OAN was not lowered further. Concern regarding the current numbers proposed to be allocated for Mersea, problems of access into and out of the island and the implication for emergency services or emergency evacuation should the site at Bradwell be designated again for nuclear power generation, the greater potential for one site in Mersea but the likelihood that this would be unpopular and the need for the proposed allocation to be reduced to 175 or 200 at most. The recent emergence of another site at Middlewick Ranges which may have the capacity to take pressure from Mersea but would be in need of solutions in relation to access from Mersea Road. The need for West Mersea Parish Council to revisit the idea of developing a Neighbourhood Plan.
- Provisional support for the Garden Community proposal to the East of Colchester and agreement for the need for the Salary Brook boundaries to be delineated in order to establish the green buffer. Welcoming the proposals for the establishment of Local Delivery Vehicles for both of the Colchester located Garden Community proposals. Doubts expressed regarding the delivery of two Garden Communities and concern in relation to the West Colchester proposal due to the absence of certainty regarding the relocation of the A120, whilst supporting the greater viability of the East Colchester proposal due in part to its proximity to the Knowledge Gateway and the A120 links. Welcoming the confirmation of a meeting with representatives from CAUSE.
- Consideration for smaller developments in the villages which would also help to support smaller building companies and with community vitality. The potential to secure affordable housing in the villages other than using the exception site option.
- The need for objectors to future housing development to acknowledge the plight of many younger people who wanted to build independent lives in their own homes. Welcoming the proposal for West Tey on the basis that this location would be able to deliver the largest number of houses required for the Borough. The need for the new Local Plan process to be progressed in order to continue Colchester's track record of working to a sound Local Plan and thus being protected in appeal situations. The importance of delivering infrastructure to accompany new housing development and the best mechanism to achieve and influence this being through the Garden Community initiative; Reference to the traveller's site in Severall's Lane and the potential to extend it with three additional pitches together with the need to co-operate with Essex County Council in delivering a transit site for the County. Concern regarding the existing high density of housing in the Highwoods area, given the reduction in numbers allocated for the site currently occupied by the rugby club. Potential for part of the rugby club site to be used for a church building and welcome the proposals to adopt a Country Park in the Salary Brook area along the same principles as that for Highwoods Country Park;
- Comment on the very high level of representations received to the consultation and the benefits for the public of illustrating the geographical extent of the proposals being put forward and of providing much more detail in relation to the Garden Community vision, what it will look like and what it will mean;
- Welcoming the challenging views expressed by Colin Tuckwell, including the need to consider in detail the potential impact on services such as the NHS, bearing in

mind the actual quantity of housing being planned and the current difficulty in delivering adequate services by the local hospitals. Support for the concerns regarding proposed housing numbers in Mersea, given similar problems of lack of local facilities and difficulty in accessing schools and GP practices by residents in Peldon. The need for the recently identified site at Middlewick Ranges to be considered in detail in terms of its viability. Welcoming the positive attitude expressed by Alan Walker from Marks Tey Parish Council, especially given the numbers of houses being contemplated over the life of the Plan and the absence of clearly defined boundaries. Concern regarding suggestions of representations being amended, a request to be permitted to attend the meeting taking place between officers and representatives from CAUSE and a comment that the 76 page representation submitted by CAUSE would need a separate briefing in its own right. A view that the Garden Community proposal for West Colchester was predicated on improvements to the A120 being delivered and was therefore premature to consider at this stage. Agreement with the argument that one Garden Community may be deliverable rather than two and the greater viability of the East Colchester proposal given the proximity to the Knowledge Gateway with the West Colchester proposal being considered towards the end of the Plan period. Agreement with the view that the Salary Brook Country Park boundaries needed to be defined and also, to help with engagement, the need for more detailed information about the Local Plan process to be available to the public. Support for the view that the Parish Council be invited to be involved in the Local Delivery Vehicle. Comments regarding the information in the options document relating to Birch and that it had become out of date in terms of the number shops, school places and lack of infrastructure which made its continued consideration unsuitable. Reference to the willingness of Layer Marney to plan for 15 houses across two sites and was a viable location given the bus route on the A1022 and links to Tiptree;

- The Garden Community initiatives provided an opportunity to develop green links within the Borough and the benefit therefore of considering the approach which had been adopted in relation to the establishment of Highwoods Country Park. Support for the phasing of the Garden Communities and for East Colchester to be developed earlier. Concern regarding the number of houses being proposed for Mersea, especially given the lack of resources and gratitude to the many Mersea residents who had taken the trouble to attend the meeting;
- Reference to the level of housing which had been continuously provided over the last 40 years in Colchester and the very large number of representations which had been received to the consultation. Acknowledgement that new housing was required for all families as children grew up and wished to lead independent lives but the vital need for residential development to be built in line with adequate infrastructure prior to the occupation of the houses. The need for strong political will over a long period of time to ensure the successful delivery of the Plan;
- The need for infrastructure to be considered as a vital piece of the Local Plan delivery and a recognition that to be successful various other agencies needed to be involved and supportive of the proposals. The added complexity of planning to deliver new communities across local authority boundaries and support for the meeting being

arranged with CAUSE. Support for the suggested amendments to the options document in relation to Great Horkesley to refer to enhanced community facilities as well as allotments and a scout headquarters as a benefit of further new development;

- Full support for the Garden Communities proposals and the need for both East and West Colchester locations to be pursued, given the number of houses which needed to be provided over the life of the Plan. Support for the Salary Brook Country Park and the need for it to be delivered following the same principles as that adopted for Highwoods Country Park. The need for the Middlewick Ranges initiative to be viewed with caution in terms of its ability to compensate for reductions in housing numbers elsewhere. Concern regarding the adoption of the Battleswick Farm site bearing in mind potential risk of flooding but also caution in relation to the suitability of the recently emerging alternative site and the need to avoid any encroachment to sites in Old Heath and the protection of historic buildings;
- The area of Berechurch had seen exponential growth over a number of years which had led to considerable pressure on GP practices. Acknowledgement that the Garden Communities proposals would take time to come to fruition but would provide more control over the delivery and timing of infrastructure as well as providing the best protection against development by default which was happening in neighbouring authorities. If these proposals were not pursued, or only one option rather than both, then this would create extra pressure on communities like Mersea. The requirement for sub-market rented housing to be included in the Garden Community model and for local developers to be supportive of this aspect.

The Chairman briefly summarised the pertinent matters which had come forward from the discussion in terms of:

- The Local plan process was acknowledged as the correct mechanism to plan properly and to put infrastructure in place;
- Concern about partners in the process such as the NHS and the need to bring these partners to discussions;
- A Neighbourhood Plan for Mersea needed to be considered, with acknowledgement that it may take around three years to implement;
- The Middlewick Ranges proposal needed to be looked at in more detail;
- Salary Brook was seen as key in East Colchester and the Country Park boundaries needed to be as wide as possible;
- Garden Community proposals needed to include community centres as part of the infrastructure requirements;
- A willingness for the individual identities of Wivenhoe and Rowhedge not to be lost;
- The alternative proposal for Rowhedge needed to be looked at in detail, including avoidance of encroachment into Old Heath;
- Further consideration of the housing numbers allocated to Mersea, bearing in mind the need for the overall OAN total to be delivered.

The Place Strategy Manager commented further to explain:

- The Middlewick ranges site had been put forward by the Ministry of Defence with an estimate of 2,000 homes. Officers were aware that the site would have associated ecology issues which would require investigation which meant it was likely to be considered towards the later stages of the Plan. She confirmed that an allocation at Middlewick would not eliminate the requirement to allocate housing at all other sites;
- There was not an ample supply of sites and it had not been possible to include a contingency;
- The Health Authority had proven to be difficult to engage with but more recently this had changed and contacts had been established locally with the Estates Manager;
- The Garden Community proposals reflected the terminology used by the Government and the principles contained in the Town and Country Planning Act;
- If errors had occurred in recording comments made in the consultation then this had been unintentional and, if requested, could be corrected;
- Steps were being taken to engage with the residents of Marks Tey in relation to the West Colchester proposals;
- The two minor changes suggested to the Great Horkesley section of the options document were able to be accommodated;
- It was possible to utilise local letting policies for affordable housing in certain circumstances;
- The case for sites to be allocated in Layer Marney would be investigated whilst the information relating to Birch and its continued relevance would be reviewed.

RESOLVED that, subject to the inclusion of the omissions referred to by the Place Strategy Manager in her introduction to the report, the reference to the enlargement of the Great Horkesley Village Hall being changed to 'enhancing community buildings' and the inclusion of the provision of allotments and a scout headquarters with public access as the principal public benefits from allowing more development in Great Horkesley, the representations received following the recent public consultation on the Colchester Local Plan Preferred Options be noted.

90 Adoption of the Myland and Braiswick Neighbourhood Plan

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services providing details of the Myland and Braiswick Neighbourhood Plan.

Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, presented the report and responded to Councillors' questions. Karen explained that in 2013 the Council had designated the area for the purpose of preparing the Myland and Braiswick Neighbourhood Plan. This included the whole of Myland parish and, following the 2016 Boundary Review, an additional area of Braiswick and a small area which was within the Highwoods Ward. Public consultation had been undertaken which included a household survey which received almost 800 responses and informed the following aspects of the plan:

- Housing should be of quality design and meet all needs;
- Education should cater for all needs in step with growth;

- Employment should be supported at a local level;
- Environment should be protected and enhanced where possible;
- Social amenity should meet the community's needs;
- Sport and leisure should be available as key to health and well-being;
- Roads and transport options should be available and effective.

A pre-submission draft consultation was also undertaken in May/June 2015 as well as a Submission consultation in January/February 2016.

The Myland and Braiswick Neighbourhood Plan was examined during April and May 2016 and, subject to minor amendments, the independent examiner had found that the plan satisfied all the Basic Conditions and recommended that the plan proceed to Referendum. The Referendum on the Myland and Braiswick Neighbourhood Plan was held on 15 September 2016 with 1,070 (87.4%) in favour of the plan and 154 against.

Members of the Committee acknowledged the work required to bring the Plan to fruition and welcomed the adoption of this and the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan which would make Colchester the first Essex authority to adopt Neighbourhood Plans.

RECOMMENDED to Council that, following its approval at examination and referendum, the Myland and Braiswick Neighbourhood Plan be made (adopted) following which the Plan will become part of Colchester Borough Council's Local Development Plan.

91 Adoption of the the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Commercial Services providing details of the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan.

Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager, presented the report and responded to Councillors' questions. Karen explained that, in 2012, the Council had designated the area for the purpose of preparing the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan which included the whole of Boxted Parish.

Extensive consultation had been undertaken to support the development of the Neighbourhood Plan, including a drop-in event attended by 250 people which generated 350 responses and the distribution of a household survey which received 226 responses. The questionnaire informed the following aspects of the plan:

- Housing development at Hill Farm, Boxted Cross;
- Support for appropriate small scale employment in Boxted, including smallholdings;
- Environment should be protected and enhanced through the provision of a new Village Green;
- Improvements to community infrastructure including sports & leisure facilities, open space, a village shop and broadband;

- Highway improvements;
- A Travel Plan to manage traffic issues at the village school.

After an initial Submission Consultation in 2014 the developer/owner of Hill Farm, lodged an appeal against the Council's decision to refuse planning permission to develop the only site being proposed for housing in the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan. The appeal was unsuccessful but required changes to be made to the Plan document to reflect the appeal inspector's comments. The amended document was subject to a second Submission consultation.

The Boxted Neighbourhood Plan was examined during April/May 2016 and, subject to minor amendments, the independent examiner had found that the plan satisfied all the Basic Conditions and recommended that the draft plan proceed to Referendum. The Referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan had been held on 15 September 2016 with 305 (81.5%) in favour of the plan and 69 against.

Members of the Committee acknowledged the work required to bring the Plan to fruition and welcomed the adoption of this and the Myland and Braiswick Neighbourhood Plan which would make Colchester the first Essex authority to adopt Neighbourhood Plans.

RECOMMENDED to Council that, following its approval at examination and referendum, the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan be made (adopted) following which the Plan will become part of Colchester Borough Council's Local Development Plan.