

# Local Plan Committee

Monday, 12 June 2017

**Attendees:** Councillor Lewis Barber, Councillor Nick Barlow, Councillor Nigel Chapman, Councillor Andrew Ellis, Councillor Adam Fox, Councillor Martin Goss, Councillor Dominic Graham, Councillor John Jowers, Councillor Gerard Oxford, Councillor Martyn Warnes

**Substitutes:** No substitutes were recorded at the meeting

**Also Present:**

## 109 Appointment of Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Goss be appointed Chairman for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

## 110 Appointment of Deputy Chairman

RESOLVED that Councillor Barlow be appointed Deputy Chairman for the forthcoming Municipal Year.

## 111 Minutes of 27 March 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2017 were confirmed as a correct record.

## 112 Publication Draft Local Plan

**Councillor Jowers (in respect of his membership of Essex County Council's Development and Regulation Committee) 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 at Mersea Road, Langenhoe) 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 Preferred Options Local Plan document which, once approved, was due to be the basis of a public consultation for a period of eight weeks between July and September 2016.

Sir Bob Russell addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to the Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Community. He explained that he had lost confidence with the Local plan process as he had visited the Committee on six occasions yet there was still a failure to engage. He voiced reservations about development at Middlewick but was particularly concerned at the lack of information included in the report in relation to Salary Brook despite the unanimous view expressed at workshop sessions about the need for green infrastructure within the plan.

The Place Strategy Manager confirmed the continued intention to protect the Salary Brook area and explained that the detail would be included in the site specific documents which could forward at a later stage in the Local Plan process.

John Stewart, on behalf of Myland Community Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to North Colchester. He explained that the Community Council was generally supportive of the Northern gateway proposals, however there was concern in relation to the intended access to the development at the existing rugby club site, off Mill Road. The Community Council were of the view that access to this area needed to be from Axial Way due to current congestion problems associated with Mill Road. He also questioned the design of the extra care home intended for the rugby club site and the need to remain in line with green landscape aspirations.

Councillor Graham, ward councillor for Mile End, confirmed that he had not yet formed a view on the matters raised by Myland Community Council.

John Akker addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the plan relating to Mersea Island. He confirmed that he also had no confidence in the Plan process, which he considered to be flawed. He referred to proposals for 200 houses in two sites on Mersea Island and was of the view that this amount of housing would open the door to much more development which was unlikely to be viable. He was concerned about the intentions of the developers and the number of houses they were looking to deliver within the proposed plan. He considered there was no justification for the level of development proposed for Mersea Island and asked the Committee members to reject the proposals.

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) in opposition to that part of the plan relating to the West of Colchester and Braintree Borders Garden Community. She asked the Committee members to stop the

proposals for West Tey as, in her view, the evidence contained in the business case did not stack up. She was concerned that inflationary elements had not been included and that proposals for a new rail station would not be implemented until 2058. She also considered that West Tey did not deliver sufficient jobs and that this had not been adequately addressed in the Sustainability Appraisal. She was also of the view that a complex infrastructure plan was required if the West Tey proposals were to be successful but the plans hadn't addressed this adequately. She considered local people deserved better and asked the Committee members to oppose the proposals for West Tey.

Andrew Martin addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the plan relating to the West of Colchester and Braintree Borders Garden Community. He explained that he represented R.F West who owned 400 acres of land south of the A12 and West Tey. He explained that he was in support of the Garden Communities proposals for the Borough. He considered that the proposals were in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework's principles for large scale development and the area to the west of Colchester had been identified as a sustainable location for a garden community development with potential for enhancement and improvement. He acknowledged that he had reservation about the timescales envisaged for the development, particularly in relation to the delivery at the end of the plan period. He was also concerned about the infrastructure delivery and the need for development of a sufficient scale to come forward at an early stage in order to release the infrastructure elements.

David Cooper addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the plan relating to Mersea Island. He referred to the changing nature of the static caravan sites on Mersea Island, explaining that there was now a total of 2,036 pitches most of which had been granted 12 or 11 month usage. He was of the view that the Coastal Protection Belt needed to be protected and the status quo maintained. He considered that the static caravans equated to homes as the occupants put a strain on local services in the same way as other residents of the Island.

Alison Finch addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the plan relating to South Colchester, including Middlewick. She was concerned about the lack of infrastructure in relation to the proposed development at Middlewick Ranges. She explained that the land was known to be heavily contaminated and, as such, it would be necessary to investigate the extent of this before development proposals were defined. She also considered that the site was likely to reveal historical artefacts indicating that the site would be of benefit as a tourist area rather than for housing development. She sought a delay in the proposals to enable a full survey to be undertaken.

Councillor Lilley attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the

Committee on that part of the plan relating to South Colchester including Middlewick. He referred to the development at Rowhedge Business Park and the support from local residents for this proposal in preference to previous proposals at an alternative site. He was also concerned about the access arrangements for the Middlewick Ranges site given the considerable existing traffic congestion problems on the neighbouring road network. The Highway Authority had indicated the need to look at alternative access points and the local MP had referred to the need for improvements to congestion. However, he was of the view that discussions should now take place with the Ministry of Defence seeking their withdrawal of proposals to sell the site for housing development.

Chris Hill addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to the Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Community. He referred to aspirations for a Country Park in the form of a green buffer at Salary Brook and was concerned that no mention had been made of this in the current report. He also advocated the need for additional social housing and was of the view that a ratio of 25% should be sought by the council for all developments. He referred to the need for any future Garden Community development to maintain a clear separation between it, Wivenhoe and Elmstead Market. He commented on the lack of reference to Gypsy and Traveller provision and the need for employment and infrastructure proposals to be detailed.

Councillor Smith attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He explained that he was a Director of North Essex Garden Communities Ltd and, as such, he spoke strategically of the need for the council to adopt a Local Plan. He confirmed the aspiration for the Garden Communities developments to be separate and for the housing developments to be of mixed tenure. He also indicated the intention in Colchester for the social housing allocation to be exceeded where possible. He was aware that in the past development had been delivered without the requisite infrastructure in place and, he was of the view, that the Garden Community model would seek to change this and to provide for necessary infrastructure before the delivery of housing. He hoped that the Garden Communities proposed in Essex would provide a model which would be followed elsewhere in the country. He congratulated the Local Plan Committee members for their diligence in managing to reduce the total number of houses which needed to be delivered in Colchester each year to the current total of 920. This was in the light of 4,000 people currently on the Council's housing register as well as families living in over-crowded accommodation and people unable to afford to buy their own home. He felt the Council had a duty to do what was right for Colchester and, as such, it was necessary that a robust Local Plan was delivered and he urged the Committee members to adopt the Plan as set out in the report.

James Elmer, on behalf of Great Tey Parish Council Planning Committee, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) on that part of the plan relating to East Colchester. He referred to the proposals for Great Tey and asked that two sites be removed from the Plan. He questioned the numbers of

houses which had been allocated for Great Tey, given numbers elsewhere had been reduced and was also concerned that one site had been included in the Plan at a very late stage and was not supported by residents. He further confirmed that the Great Tey Neighbourhood Plan was now progressing well and asked for information about the forthcoming meeting at the Village Hall.

The Place Strategy Manager confirmed that the sites were located at the edge of a village where lower densities were appropriate and, as such, the proposed numbers for the two sites in Great Tey had been reduced accordingly. The amendment sheet for the meeting included up to date information about the progress with the Neighbourhood Plan. She also confirmed that the consultation event at the Village Hall would follow a format used elsewhere and that the intention would be for councillors and officers to be in attendance to respond to questions.

Philip Jellard, on behalf of Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex (CAUSE), addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the plan relating to the West of Colchester and Braintree Borders Garden Community. He considered the West Tey proposals were complex with a high risk of failure. He was concerned at the low level of contingency included in the plans and considered that the estimated costs for infrastructure were about 50% short of the likely true cost, particularly in relation to a rapid transport system and the complete lack of funding allocated for community halls and places of worship. He considered the proposals for West Tey to be totally uneconomic and deeply unpopular whilst also having the effect of blighting the countryside for years before the development was due to commence.

David Churchill, on behalf of Icen Projects, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the Plan relating to the West of Colchester and Braintree Borders Garden Community. He explained that he was part of the promotional team working on the West Tey proposals. He made reference to significant levels of employment, improved connectivity and employment opportunities. He considered the evidence showed that the proposals were capable of being delivered, were appropriate, adaptable and accessible whilst the alternative options were not capable of delivering the same benefits. The delivery of the Garden Communities was critical to the success of the Local Plan and he urged the Committee members to continue their work.

Noel Mead addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to infrastructure. He explained he was a resident of Great Tey and was concerned about the proposals for around 10,000 new homes which would bring around 24,000 additional residents over the length of the plan. He referred to the timescales for the realignment of the A120, made reference to a lack of planning for major improvements by the NHS and the existing over-capacity of the rail network. He was of the view that the Committee

members should reject the proposals.

Councillor Pearson attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to South Colchester including Middlewick. He asked the Committee members to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure would be in place prior to any implementation of the development at Middlewick Ranges. He considered the needs of both current and future residents needed to be taken into account, bearing in mind that existing road junctions were already over-capacity. He asked for creative solutions to be considered such as a tramway as well as the provision of community and educational facilities as well as the potential relocation of the existing Cherry Tree School to address exiting parking difficulties. He also advocated improvements to local doctors and dentists facilities as well as transport improvements which would not impact on the Birch glen area. He further considered that the Ministry of Defence should ensure that the site would be free from hazardous materials prior to its disposal and requested significant parts of the site be allocated for affordable housing.

Nick Chilvers addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the Plan relating to economic growth. He referred to transport and employment issues in the South of Colchester and was particularly concerned in the light of proposals for 1,000 homes at Middlewick. He was of the view that sustainable transport was impracticable for most people and that Colchester had small town infrastructure with big town housing. Provision needed to be made to open up the road capacity and to consider the creation of a Southern Relief Road. He considered the south of the town tended to suffer the most as it was furthest from the A12 and did not attract development as a consequence.

Councillor Cory attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to the Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Community. He supported the guiding principles of the Garden Communities concept however he considered the Council needed to listen to residents. He referred to everyday congestion problems at Clingoe Hill and advocated a rapid transport solution to get people out of their cars. The Garden Community proposals needed to include protection for the green buffer, to take account of the university and existing communities and to include green transport solutions.

Councillor Moore attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to Mersea Island. She was concerned about the Mersea Island caravan parks which now provided for about 2,000 pitches, accommodating 8,000 residents which increased to nearer 20,000 people over some weekends. It wasn't safe to travel on the Island on foot which meant that most journeys were undertaken by car which was damaging to the local environment. She explained that a further caravan site at Cosways had not been included in the report and voiced her concerns about the harm already caused to the Coastal Protection Belt due to the location of the caravan parks, such that she was of the view that there a ban on

additional or intensification of caravan accommodation would be justified. She also referred to the potential for a new nuclear power station at Bradwell and the adverse implications on the Mersea Island community in the event of the need for an emergency evacuation. She acknowledged the recent reduction in the number of proposed houses allocated for Mersea to 200 but sought assurances that this total would not increase again at a later date.

Sam Bampton, on behalf of City and Country, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the plan relating to Mersea Island. He supported the allocation of housing on Mersea Island and explained that City and Country were a niche developer striving to achieve high quality developments. He considered West Mersea would continue to grow and welcomed the Council's plans to provide for growth within the community. The proposed development at Brierley Paddocks would provide access via the existing entrance or from Seaview Avenue and the scheme would have the landscape at its heart. The homes would be at a relatively low density and include starter homes as well as affordable houses.

Councillor J. Young attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Communities. She was concerned about the consultation exercise and the methodology used to gather responses online and at workshop events. She spoke in support of a tramway system and a country park to protect the environment. She was firmly of the view that housing needed to be of mixed tenure and at the same density as the non-affordable housing. She also advocated the need for GP surgeries to be clearly identified prior to implementation of the development, she opposed proposals for development south of the A133 and was of the view that the view that a district centre needed to be in the centre of the new community.

Allan Walker, Chairman of Marks Tey Parish Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the Plan relating to the West of Colchester and Braintree Borders Garden Community. He asked the Committee to identify more employment land to accompany the housing development and for the Council to provide active and meaningful community engagement of the proposals. He referred to Lord Kerslake's report and the need for the timescales and viability assessments to be completed in addition to the A12 and A120 improvements. He was concerned that no further detail had been forthcoming about employment and that community members felt that they were not being involved and they had been unable to find minutes of meetings or background papers to assist. This had led to protest groups being formed with people believing that the council were deliberately ignoring the residents' views. He advocated learning from practices elsewhere, such as East Hertfordshire Council, and for councillors to take the lead in order to influence changes for the better. He stressed that if improvements were not forthcoming then residents' concerns would not go away.

Councillor Scott attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to the Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Communities. She spoke in support of the work undertaken by the officers and the Committee members and also welcomed the development at the university. However, she referred also to transport proposals, sustainability with emphasis being placed on walking and cycling, the need to avoid development south of the A133 and for a binding commitment that Salary Brook would be enhanced and improved. She further welcomed the provision for affordable housing and was hopeful this would be in the order of 35%.

Councillor Buston attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to the West Colchester and Stanway. He referred to his election as a councillor in 2000 when traffic, congestion, infrastructure and connectivity were matters of concern as they remained today. He commended the work of the officers but considered there was no joined up decision making in relation to transport issues. He considered the borough was in desperate need of a Southern Relief Road which remained an important strategic issue. He further considered that neither of the Garden Community proposals would succeed without the benefit of this transport link being constructed.

Asa Aldis, on behalf of Wivenhoe Town Council, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to the Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Community. He commented that Tendring District Council seemed to be considering a different plan to the one considered at this meeting as Tendring had included development south of the A133 which was not acceptable to local residents. He questioned whether residents would be ignored and what would be done to prevent Tendring District Council's views predominating. He commented that Colchester's housing targets had been exceeded for many years whilst the health care provision in the area had not kept pace. He asked for the views of Wivenhoe residents to be listened to and for the proposed housing numbers for the Garden Community to be reduced and for the densities to be at an acceptable level.

Stuart Cock addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the Plan relating to the Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Community. He congratulated the council on the contents of the plan in that it provided for housing allocations to meet the anticipated need as well as new jobs to meet the long term employment needs for the borough. He welcomed the transition to large scale growth locations and economically driven proposals. He understood that people were concerned about social infrastructure proposals as well as physical infrastructure and welcomed anyone interested to attend the forthcoming Garden Communities conference at the University of Essex.

Councillor Scordis attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to South Colchester, including Middlewick.



He was fearful about the infrastructure requirements for the Middlewick Ranges site, particularly in the light of a traffic survey he had undertaken during which he had registered 819 traffic movements in the morning and evening peak times. He was of the view that the proposed 1,000 homes on the site would require the capacity of the road network to be doubled notwithstanding the increase in noise and air pollution. He referred to the need for infrastructure in terms of schools and jobs and explained that people were disinclined to use buses in favour of their own cars. He was not opposed to housing development in principle but considered the proposed number to be too great whilst also being concerned about potential contamination of the site as well as its ecological value. He speculated whether the site could be used as a country park or wildlife reserve for the benefit of the local community.

Mark Goacher addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in opposition to that part of the Plan relating to Development Policies. He questioned the contents of the report in relation to the Environmental Assets Policy and the lack of available information and voiced his concerns about the harm to green infrastructure caused by development. He understood that designated sites would be protected but was concerned about vague statements which weren't supported with assurances.

Councillor L. Scott-Boutell attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee on that part of the Plan relating to West Colchester and Stanway. She referred to the forthcoming drop-in session to be held in Stanway and whether sufficient information had been made available to publicise the event. She questioned when the allocation of the former Sainsburys site had been revised to residential land for up to 200 dwellings and referred to land at Chitts Hill and the likely submission of a speculative planning application for 120 dwellings, contrary to the proposed allocation of 100 dwellings. She was also concerned about future closure of Dyers Road and the resulting impact on the five ways junction. She welcomed the Colchester Zoo masterplan document and associated road improvements along Maldon Road and Warren Lane and sought further information about likely timescales.

Will Bramhill, on behalf of Colchester Cycling Campaign, addressed the Committee pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(3) in support of that part of the Plan relating to the process vision / objectives and spatial strategy. He referred to the anticipated improvements to the A12 and A120 and asked whether the additional traffic generated as a result had been taken into account. He referred to segregated cycle routes and he condemned the new cycle path along Mile End Road. He was of the view that there needed to be more dynamism of thought in the proposals for future transport, particularly in relation to electric cars.

Councillor Willetts attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He explained that the Government had provided district councils, not county councils or local enterprise partnerships, with responsibility for Local Plans. As such he

considered that Colchester's Local Plan should be geared to the requirements of Colchester residents and not to the needs of our neighbours. Unlike the surrounding districts, Colchester had strived to encourage growth. However infrastructure proposals had failed to materialise due to failure of the Council to deliver on its promises. He accepted the need to build between 800 and 900 houses each year and welcomed the contribution that larger settlements would give. He was of the view that East Colchester was viable, clearly defined and deliverable whilst accepting that more detail needed to be addressed. However, he considered that the West Colchester / Braintree Garden Community proposals were premature and not viable, a view which had been supported by Lord Kerslake. He therefore proposed that Section 1 only of the plan should be approved in respect of the Colchester and Tendring proposals as it was only when the delivery vehicle had been agreed that the West Colchester / Braintree proposals could be progressed.

Councillor T. Young, in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Business and Culture (and Deputy Leader of the Council) attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Committee. He explained that he was an alternate Director of North Essex Garden Communities Ltd. He confirmed that the recommendations and proposals from Tendring District Council relating to development to the south of the A133 were unacceptable and agreed with the view that the district centre needed to be in the centre of the new community. He acknowledged the need for 920 houses to be built in Colchester each year and sites needed to be allocated in order to accommodate these houses. He agreed that Salary Brook needed to be defended and was in support of the creation of a country park. In relation to the Middlewick Ranges site, he was aware that a number of issues needed to be resolved but confirmed that it was imperative that the council had an up to date and robust Local Plan in order to prevent development in an unplanned way with developers free to submit speculative applications at will. He was against urban sprawl and, as such, was supportive of the Garden Communities proposals which he considered were an valuable opportunity for brilliant urban design and to provide development in the right way. His view was that Lord Kerslake was not opposed to the West Colchester / Braintree Garden Community proposals. The two Garden Communities formed an integral part of the draft Local Plan which was supported by the Cabinet members.

The Place Strategy Manager responded to points made:

- Access to the rugby club site from Axial Way was not in the remit of the Local Plan Committee;
- The proposals for Brierley Paddock would include community uses and the Parish Council would be in a position to assist in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan work;
- She confirmed the evidence base was considered to be robust, there was no intention to exceed the housing targets and the council was being realistic in relation to the delivery vehicles;
- She agreed to look at the policy relating to static caravans and arrange to look to amend it in relation to touring sites, where necessary;

- She explained that the evidence for Middlewick Ranges was being undertaken at a late stage due to the timing of the allocation. She further explained that the council was obliged to consider all submissions, even those late in the process and the proposed number of units was now half that originally sought by the Ministry of Defence;
- The Council's affordable housing policy had now increased the ratio to 30% and this level was being reflected in the Garden Communities proposals;
- She confirmed that development would provide for a clear separation between the Elmstead Market and the Wivenhoe communities;
- She acknowledged the comments in relation to Salary Brook and indicated that she would arrange for an amendment to the plan to reinforce previous statements about the need to protect the area;
- The improvements to the A12 and A120 would be dependent on the outcome of the consultation exercises;
- She welcomed the views of Councillor Pearson in relation to Middlewick Ranges proposals and confirmed that any development would include necessary infrastructure;
- In terms of South Colchester there were a number of employment sites which had been identified which were not necessarily all in employment zones;
- A transport plan for Colchester was awaited from Essex County Council;
- The detail of the Garden Communities proposals was being worked on and more information would be available at the next stage of the Local Plan process;
- She confirmed that a buffer between existing communities would be maintained;
- In terms of the static caravan parks, she indicated that research showed that few people opted to live permanently at the sites and a balance needed to be drawn to take account of the needs of the holiday industry but she would welcome suggested changes to the existing policy via the consultation exercise;
- She confirmed that site specific details of the Garden Communities proposals would be subject to changes as a result of the consultation exercise which would be presented to the Committee for consideration;
- A recruitment exercise would be commenced to appoint Community Enablers to undertake on engagement work with residents;
- She confirmed that a Southern Relief Road was being planned;
- Tendring District Council was working towards the same Section 1 of the Plan as Colchester and Braintree and she would ensure that the consultants were made aware of the comments made in relation to development south of the A133;
- She acknowledged that the Ministry of Defence would need to be forward thinking in terms of the transport proposals for the Middlewick Ranges site;
- She was confident that the approach adopted in the Environmental Assets Policy was sufficiently robust;
- Stanway Parish Council had been informed some three weeks ago of the details of the drop-in session in Stanway and information had also been circulated via social media;
- She confirmed that speculative applications for development had been resisted in the past and was confident that this would continue to be the case;
- She confirmed that a transport assessment would be undertaken to demonstrate

where improvements were required;

- She confirmed that collaboration with neighbouring Local Authorities was a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework;
- She confirmed that Colchester had successfully met its housing targets in many years previously and, as such, there was no requirement on the Council to make up any shortfall in the future.

Karen Syrett, Place Strategy Manager presented the report and, together with Ian Vipond, Strategic Director, responded to Councillors questions. She referred to the Addendum Sheet which had been published and circulated at the meeting which included a number of amendments to the report and associated documents and needed to be taken into account when the Committee came to its decision.

Karen explained that the currently adopted Local Plan for Colchester consisted of the Core Strategy, first adopted in 2008, along with the Development Policies and Site Allocations, adopted in 2010. In order to keep the plan up to date, and in line with Government guidance, a Focused Review resulting in revisions to selected Core Strategy and Development Policies had been adopted in 2014. As a first stage in the development of a new Local Plan, the Council had carried out an Issues and Options consultation in January/February 2015, considering six strategic growth options involving three potential sites for sustainable new settlements to the West, East and North of Colchester. Landowners and developers had also been invited to put forward potential sites for development, known as a 'Call for Sites' with the submissions received informing part of the evidence base to demonstrate the potential supply of land available to accommodate the growth requirements of the Borough. This work had also been carried out in co-operation with neighbouring councils and Essex County Council to ensure the Duty to Cooperate was met and to facilitate exploration of cross-boundary planning options, including Garden Communities.

This initial work was consolidated into a Preferred Options consultation held in June-July 2016 which set out the Council's preferred spatial strategy, planning policies and allocations as justified by its evidence base and Sustainability Appraisal for both Sections, incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment (this integrated appraisal is referred to as the Sustainability Appraisal). The 6 options for growth outlined in the Issues and Options were refined into one preferred option involving:

- a continuing focus on urban Colchester
- small scale development in identified 'Sustainable Settlements'; and
- development of two new Garden Communities to the east and west of Colchester.

The preferred spatial strategy reflected the outcome of draft Sustainability Appraisal work on Sections 1 and 2, the overall evidence base, deliverability considerations, the availability of sites, and an overall evaluation of the combination of allocations and policies that would produce the most sustainable pattern of growth. It had been

concluded that new settlement options were only acceptable if promoted as Garden Communities given that communities built on Garden Community principles would be able to address requirements for infrastructure and community stewardship as part of meeting the requirement for housing and employment land. The selection of three sites spread across the three authorities reflected consensus between the authorities on an equitable and sustainable division of growth to meet identified need.

The Local Plan had to be justified to meet the soundness test as explained in paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework, meaning that it should be the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives. Working in co-operation with Braintree District Council and Tendring District Council, it had been agreed that the most appropriate long term strategy for North Essex was to meet housing need in three new garden communities. Having regard to the Sustainability Appraisal and other factors, it was considered that new communities to the west of Braintree, between Colchester and Braintree, and the east of Colchester were most appropriate.

The Preferred Options plan was divided into two sections comprising firstly, strategic policies including Garden Communities proposals prepared jointly with Braintree District Council and Tendring District Council (Section 1) and secondly local policies and allocations for Colchester Borough (Section 2). The Preferred Options consultation, which consulted on both Section 1 and Section 2 elements, attracted 3,102 representations from 1,539 respondents.

The timetable for Local Plan work was being tracked through the publication of a periodically updated Local Development Scheme (LDS), last reviewed by this Committee in February 2017. The LDS provided the timetable for delivery of all Local Plan documents, including the programmed date for adoption of a new Local Plan of September 2018. The LDS included this referral to Committee in May with public consultation scheduled for a six week period to run from 16 June to 28 July 2017. Braintree District Council and Tendring District Council would consult on their own Local Plans on the same dates. The views gathered would then be submitted to Government for examination alongside the plan, Sustainability Appraisal, and supporting evidence base. There will be two examinations in public involved in plan adoption. The strategic element of the Local Plan (Section 1) common to Braintree, Colchester and Tendring Local Plans will be examined jointly. Assuming that the examiner is able to confirm that, in principle, Section 1 is sound, then there will be separate examinations of each Local Plan's unique policies (as contained in Section 2 of each Local Plan).

The Strategic Director explained that 920 homes per year were being provided for but there were also realistic and deliverable plans for an equal number of jobs. He also referred to the equal number of commuters who travelled into Colchester for work as there was who travelled out. He considered it a bold step for Colchester's Local Plan Committee to look further forward beyond the current the current proposals and to also

include plans with neighbouring Local Authorities to give the opportunity to plan strategically for the area as a whole. He confirmed that the level of contingency in the plans was 10% overall, not 5%, as reported and, specifically for infrastructure the contingency was set at 24%. He went on to explain that Wolfson recommended a contingency of £50k per dwelling and the current proposals accorded with this recommendation. The detail of the Development Plan documents would be subject to comments from the consultation exercise, which would then be approved by the Local Plan Committee for onward submission to an Inspector. He further confirmed that minutes of the Board meetings of North Essex Garden Communities Ltd were now available online.

The committee members gave full and detailed consideration to the report and the comments made by those members of the public present at the meeting. In particular, the following comments were made:

Councillor Jowers:

- He would not be willing to support proposals for Mersea Island any more than a maximum of 200 houses, and preferably fewer and if a windfall site came forward he would expect the number from existing sites to be fewer;
- He welcomed the progression of a Neighbourhood Plan by the Parish Council but it was essential that it reflected the views of Mersea residents;
- He accepted the need to co-operate with neighbouring authorities but the existence of a current Local Plan needed to be acknowledged;
- He referred to the lack of brownfield sites and the associated loss of employment land;
- He considered there to be risks involved in undertaking two Garden Community proposals concurrently with his preference being for the East Colchester option to proceed first whilst he was of the view that the West Colchester proposals were premature, given the need to know the outcome of the A120 consultation and improvements to the A12;
- He advocated the need to allocate more employment sites in the villages to reduce the reliance on cars for travel to work;
- He supported the need for a full consultation.

Councillor G. Oxford:

- He fully supported the Garden Communities concept on the basis that it gave opportunities for infrastructure to be delivered at the outset;
- He acknowledged the concerns of residents from Mersea but questioned what was to become of young people looking to buy their own homes if additional development did not take place;
- He questioned the aspirations of the Ministry of Defence and queried whether additional surplus sites may come forward for development;
- He welcomed the protection of Salary Brook;
- He referred to the numbers of people on the Council's Housing Needs Register and those in over-crowded accommodation and concluded that many more houses were needed for rent that people can afford;

- He was of the view that North and East Colchester had already taken its fair share of additional housing in the Borough;
- The rugby club site had been allocated for 340 houses and this would contribute towards the movement of sports facilities to the Northern Gateway. However, he considered the site to be small and more readily able to accommodate 240 houses with access from Axial Way rather than Mill Road;
- He was aware of a small parcel of land at the existing Travellers site in Highwoods ward which would accommodate another three pitches to add to the existing 12 pitches. He was aware that Essex County Council was looking for a future transit site for Travellers.

Councillor Ellis:

- He considered the limited facilities available on Mersea Island were pertinent to the concerns about development on the island;
- He was not happy with all of Part 2 of the plan, in particular Middlewick Ranges. He had thought this would ease the pressure for development in some of the villages but he was of the view that the infrastructure was very poor and that it would take something dramatic to make the proposals work;
- He had issues with both Garden Community proposals and indicated he would be far happier to make decisions on these when the committee knew more about where the boundaries of the communities would fall. He therefore suggested taking the Garden Communities away from the decision making until the outcome of the A12 and A120 consultations were known. This would also give an opportunity for community engagement to be undertaken;
- He asked for more information to be provided, if needs be at a future meeting, on employment development, including job creation and job opportunities.

Councillor Barber:

- He had concerns about the Garden Communities but did not support the view to defer their consideration as this may open up opportunities for speculative development. He did consider more information was necessary in terms of boundaries and contingencies and the cost of the homes in general;
- He was content with the proposals for development in Braiswick but would have preferred more detail on infrastructure and he did not consider the information in part 1 to be detailed enough;
- He considered more information was necessary in relation to employment levels, particularly in relation to suggestions that home working was likely to increase by 25%.

Councillor Graham:

- He referred to the need for people moving to Colchester from outside of the area to be welcomed;
- He shared concerns about Middlewick Ranges and supported the protection of Salary Brook;
- He agreed with the need for segregated cycle ways and also asked for more detail on the broadband speeds which were likely to be delivered within developments;
- He accepted that there were risks associated with the development of the Garden Communities but was of the view that these were acceptable;

- He was of the view that a consultation period longer than six weeks ought to be accommodated in order to ensure adequate time for the submission of views.

Councillor Fox:

- At previous meetings there had been a consensus regarding the need to build more houses and more affordable homes. He considered the Garden Communities provided a way to build in a strategic way;
- He was of the view that the deferral of any elements of the plan would open up opportunities for speculative development, whilst not co-operating with our neighbouring local authorities would be detrimental to the process;
- He was pleased that the need for transport and contamination studies in relation to Middlewick ranges had been acknowledged and it was important that these were undertaken quickly;
- He welcomed the commencement of further consultation and supported the proposals.

Councillor Warnes:

- He queried the affordable housing elements to be delivered and referred to the information in the report on employment targets of 928 jobs per year;
- He considered Community Development Workers to be essential to the building of new the communities and he sought reassurances that this would happen;
- With reference to Middlewick Ranges, he referred to the need for green buffers, infrastructure and transport issues;
- He considered a Southern Relief Road to be a necessity but was mindful of the presence of archaeological artefacts in the area and the need to be proactive to ensure they are adequately protected;
- He considered one of the benefits of Garden Communities was the opportunity to relieve pressure on existing communities.

Councillor Chapman:

- He congratulated officers on the report, the majority of which he agreed with. He supported the need for the Local Plan as well as the building of additional homes and he would welcome anyone who moved here;
- He referred to the need for smaller homes for people willing to downsize;
- He was worried that the Committee might feel obligated to approve the proposals for West Tey and he was of the view that the proposals were dependent upon the outcome of the realignment of the A120 and the improvement works to the A12;
- In terms of employment, he considered the Committee members were being asked to take a blind leap of faith and he was worried that the community would become no more than a dormitory town;
- He considered more information was needed on where jobs would come from.

Councillor Barlow:

- He congratulated the officers on the report and confirmed he was happy with the plans for Castle ward, Britannia car park and the town centre;
- He grew up in a new town and considered them to be a good concept and was aware how they could work well;
- He referred to transport issues and suggestions about a Southern Relief Road



and a rapid transport system and asked for a report to be submitted to a future meeting with more information on these suggestions;

- He was concerned about the proposals for Middlewick ranges and speculated about the likely success or failure of development on this site.

Councillor Goss:

- He agreed with the view that the consultation period needed to be as extensive as possible and proposed the extension of the consultation period from six to eight weeks;
- He considered that adequate infrastructure proposals were the key to successful future development and, as such, the concept of the Garden Communities was the only viable way forward;
- He considered the committee members were all largely content with approximately 2/3 of the plan;
- There was considerable concern about the proposals at Middlewick Ranges. The site had been submitted late to the process and there was considerable work necessary to bring about a successful delivery of the proposals which would take time to resolve. He was concerned that, if the site was removed from the plan then the Ministry of Defence may object and the Inspector may opt to increase the housing allocation to greater than 1,000;
- He acknowledged that any development could only be expected to compensate for that development, however, he struggled with the views expressed by the Highway Authority on some proposals, such as Bakers Lane;
- He acknowledged concerns about adequate job generation and quality of jobs;
- He also acknowledged the duty to co-operate with neighbouring authorities whilst bearing in mind the need also to be most mindful of matters affecting Colchester.
- He did not consider it acceptable to separate Sections 1 and 2 of the plan.

In the light of the discussion, the Spatial Policy Manager responded as follows:

- The successful retention of 'blue collar' jobs at Flakt Woods;
- Transit sites for Travellers were being looked at by Essex County Council and the site selection would be subject to due process;
- If the Garden Communities elements were removed the plan would be short in terms of housing numbers and a number of Local plans had been seen to be flawed by inspectors if they did not address housing need requirements over a 15 year period;
- Studies in relation to the Middlewick Ranges were proceeding as soon as possible;
- There would be various affordable housing scenarios on which she would provide further information to councillors as required;
- The recruitment of Community development Workers had been agreed;
- She confirmed her willingness to provide additional information on transport and employment at a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED (SIX voted FOR and FOUR voted AGAINST) that -

- (i) The contents of the Publication Draft Local Plan and accompanying Sustainability

Appraisals of Sections 1 and 2, as set out in the Appendices to the report, be approved for publication in line with regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Plan) (England) Regulations 2012;

(ii) An eight week period of public consultation on the Publication Draft Local Plan to run from 16 June to 11 August 2017 be carried out, in order that representations can be made by members of the public;

(iii) The Sustainability Appraisal of Sections 1 and 2 be published and made available to inform the consultation and engagement on the Publication Draft Local Plan and the Sustainability Appraisals;

(iv) Authority be granted for the subsequent submission of the document to the Secretary of State for examination;

(v) The Place Strategy Manager be authorised to make revisions to the document prior to publication for consultation and/or prior to submission;

(vi) The Spatial Policy Manager be requested to prepare position statements on transport and employment issues for consideration at a future meeting of the Committee.