

Braintree, Colchester and Tendring Local Plans: Section One

Statement of Common Ground between Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council, Tendring District Council, Essex County Council, and Highways England (December 2019)

Introduction

This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been prepared between the three North Essex Local Planning Authorities (Braintree, Colchester and Tendring), Essex County Council (as Highways and Transportation Authority), and Highways England (HE). The purpose of this SoCG is to inform the Planning Inspector and other parties of the agreed way forward on any issues that remain outstanding at the point of Local Plan examination.

This SoCG focusses on the strategic routes of the A12 and A120, and highlights the progress that has been made regarding these strategic highway schemes and funding bids. These changes are underlined and in italics.

- *A12 Chelmsford to A120 - widening the A12 between junction 19 (Chelmsford north) and junction 25 (A120 interchange)*
- *The announcement of the ECC 'favoured' route for the A120, which runs from Galleys Corner, Braintree to a new junction with the A12 to the south of Kelvedon*
- *Housing Infrastructure Bids (HIF), namely A120 / A133 Link Road and Rapid Transit System (£99m); A12 – Realignment between Junction 23 – 25 (£229m); and Chelmsford North East Bypass and Beaulieu Railway Station (£218m)*

Details on how the participating authorities will continue to work collaboratively to address the identified issues are described below.

Background

As part of a Local Planning Authority's responsibilities under the statutory Duty to Cooperate (DtC), the three North Essex Authorities (NEAs) have held a series of discussions with the transport authorities, Essex County Council (ECC) and Highways England (HE)

concerning strategic cross boundary matters in the preparation of the respective local plans Strategic Section 1. The discussions have come in the form of face to face meetings and workshops, as well as written correspondence.

These meetings have been held to ensure that the respective highway transportation bodies are properly consulted and have been kept fully informed with how each authority Local Plan has, and is, progressed. All authorities have found these discussions valuable and productive and there is a welcome and ongoing commitment to continue this dialogue throughout the Local Plan and Development Plan Document preparation process to assist delivery and implementation.

The NEAs will continue to work closely with HE and ECC to:

- Maximise the opportunities for better integration of all forms of transport
- Promote interventions facilitating delivery of the proposed communities through the provision of improved roads, passenger transport and opportunities for cycling and walking

The authorities are taking this through:

- Engagement and cooperative working through the North Essex Garden Communities project, particularly the Planning and Transportation Group;
- Preparation of Strategic Growth DPDs for the three Garden Communities;
- Lobbying Government for the inclusion of the A120 in 'RIS 2' and funding for rapid transit; and
- Joint preparation and submission of Bids for funding towards infrastructure schemes, which assist the delivery of housing, primarily the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Key projects during the plan period will see progression of transport schemes on the A12 and A120, and provision of rapid transit connections in and around urban areas and the Garden Communities. An integrated and sustainable transport system is being developed and delivery will support economic growth and help deliver the best quality of life.

Strategic Cross Boundary Transportation Issues - Highways

ECC and HE have not raised any concerns over the soundness of Section 1, but acknowledge the need to continue working collaboratively to evolve suitable solutions to both the local and strategic road hierarchy to facilitate delivery of the proposed garden communities. Separate to this workstream, HE is in the process of developing and delivering an upgrade to the A12 corridor through

Essex (junctions 19 – 25) and ECC are identifying opportunities to upgrade the A120 between Braintree and the A12, both of which are aimed at alleviating known congestion issues across Essex. Both schemes will also facilitate economic growth in the region.

It is also noted that access to the strategic road network i.e. the A120 is relevant for both the West of Braintree GC and Tendring Colchester Borders GC and the Transport Authorities will work jointly to produce a mutually acceptable solution, this may include junction improvements or a completely new junction(s). It is anticipated that the majority of funding for these improvements will be private investment and/or central government funded.

A12 Trunk Road

Since the publication in December 2014 of the first Road Investment Strategy, which included plans to widen a 15 mile section of the A12 trunk road, Highways England has been developing options for upgrading the A12 between junction 19 (Chelmsford north) and junction 25 (A120 interchange) to three lanes. This resulted in January 2017 in a non-statutory public consultation on four route options, the outcomes of which have informed ongoing design.

A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening (Junctions 19 to 25)

In 2017, HE held a public consultation about its plans to widen the A12 from junction 19 at Chelmsford to the junction 25 interchange with the A120.

There has been significant progress regarding the strategic routes of the A12 and A120 since the hearing session in May 2018, and the Inspector's June 2018 letter.

Preferred Route Announcement, Junction 19 – 23 (October 2019)

A preferred route announcement was made on 21 October 2019 on the widening of the A12 between junctions 19 and 23. The preferred route is based on Options 2 and 3 from the 2017 public consultation and takes into account feedback received on junctions, as well as concerns expressed about a Rivenhall End bypass being close to a scheduled monument. The proposed route includes the following changes and improvements to junctions:

- *further design review of junction 19*
- *removal of junctions 20a and 20b*

- modification of bridges across the existing A12 at Hatfield Peverel to accommodate the widening of the A12
- a new 'all movements' junction serving traffic from all directions at junctions 21 and 22
- consideration of the removal of junction 23 with new access roads provided from Kelvedon to junction 22

A12 Chelmsford to A120 Widening (Junctions 23 to 25) Public Consultation, October 2019

Given that a key function of the Strategic Road Network is to facilitate economic growth, Highways England has worked closely with the relevant local authorities to consider how the A12 could be delivered without undermining the proposed housing growth proposals for the Garden Community at Marks Tey. This has resulted in a further non-statutory consultation to gather public feedback on four alternative routes running between junctions 23 and 25 that could be used if the proposed garden community does go ahead. The consultation closed on 1 December 2019.

During October–December 2019, HE consulted on four proposed route options (A to D) for the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening between junctions 23 and 25.

If the proposed Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community (CBBGC) goes ahead, one of the options in the consultation is likely to form part of the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening project. If the proposed CBBGC does not go ahead, the route between junctions 23 and 25 will be based on the HE 2017 consultation findings.

Further work is being undertaken to understand whether the road might require a fourth lane in each direction between junctions 23 (Kelvedon South) and 24 (Kelvedon North) to accommodate traffic if the nearby A120 improvements and proposed garden community do go ahead. If a fourth lane in each direction is required, it would be applied to each option and as such, would not be a deciding factor between them.

Following a review of the outcomes of the consultation on the widening options and taking into account the outcomes of the Braintree, Colchester and Tendring Local Plans, Section One, HE expects to make a Preferred Route Announcement for the A12 between junction 23 and 25 in summer 2020. As part of statutory processes a further public consultation will be undertaken by HE to gain feedback on more detailed designs for the overall project (between junction 19 and 25) in 2020.

Programme

The A12 widening between junctions 19 and 25 (the whole route) will be progressed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008 via a single Development Consent Order (DCO). HE intend to submit their application for development consent to the Planning Inspectorate during 2021, who will examine the application, and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport. If approved, construction will commence in 2023, with the route open for traffic in 2027/28.

The full programme is as follows:

- Ongoing Stakeholder engagement
- Ongoing Technical work
- Preferred route announcement, junctions 19 – 23 in October 2019
- Public consultation for junctions 23 – 25 in October – December 2019
- Preferred route announcement, junctions 23 – 25 in 2020
- Public consultation for junctions 19 – 25 (the whole route) in 2020
- Application for Development Consent Order, junctions 19 – 25 in 2021
- Development Consent Order secured for junctions 19 to 25 in 2023
- Start of works, junctions 19 – 25 in 2023/2024
- Open for traffic, junctions 19 – 25 in 2027/2028

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

Essex County Council has submitted a number of Housing Infrastructure Fund bids to support the delivery of the proposed garden communities. Two of these relate to and have an impact on the A12 and A120 trunk roads in North Essex.

A120 / A133 Link Road and Rapid Transit System

In August 2019 it was announced that the A120/A133 Link Road and Rapid Transit System (RTS) scheme had been successful in securing £99m in funding. The RTS will service a new Park and Ride and help to better connect the planned Garden Community on the borders of Colchester and Tendring with the rest of the town. Linking the A120 and A133 with a new road will unlock land to provide housing and business space, improving connectivity locally and within the wider region. It will serve a new Park and Choose

site and manage traffic congestion going to Colchester Town Centre, the University of Essex and its Knowledge Gateway Technology and Research Park. The Link Road will also help connect the A12, the A120 and A133 to Harwich, Clacton-on-Sea and east Colchester. An RTS will prioritise public transport on a key route through Colchester. It will enable housing and business growth, allowing new and existing residents to benefit from frequent, high-quality, reliable transport connecting to the key destinations within the town. It is anticipated that a planning application will be submitted in Autumn 2020, construction to commence in 2022, and completion by 2024.

ECC is presently seeking views on a number of options for the new dual-carriageway Link Road between the A133 and the A120, and the first stage of a new Rapid Transit System across Colchester. The consultation runs until the 16th December 2019.

A12 – Realignment between Junction 23 – 25

ECC submitted a bid for £229m to realign the A12 between Kelvedon and Marks Tey. Moving the position of the A12 to the east of its existing alignment would facilitate and realise the growth potential of this part of North Essex, and in particular the CBBGC. The realignment will be complimented with a completely new junction 25 which will provide direct access to the proposed Garden Community, signalling junction 23 at Kelvedon where the A12 meets a new A120 to facilitate traffic flow and widening of the Kelvedon Bypass to four lanes in each direction. HE is working closely with ECC and the planning authorities on the proposed realignment to ensure there is no delay to delivery of the A12 widening in the event the HIF bid is successful. This includes a recent non-statutory public consultation on four proposed route options for the A12 for the realigned section.

Chelmsford North East Bypass and Beaulieu Railway Station

In August 2019 it was announced that the Chelmsford North East Bypass (CNEB) and Beaulieu Railway Station scheme had been successful in securing £218m in funding. The new Beaulieu railway station will provide access to the Great Eastern Main Line (GEML). Trains will be able to pass each other at the new station to make the whole line more reliable. It will relieve crowding at Chelmsford railway station and act as a transport interchange to encourage sustainable travel by bus, cycle, electric vehicles and on foot. The CNEB will run between the A12 and A131, and will complement Highways England's A12 Junction 19 to 25 improvements. It will relieve congested traffic on the local roads and provide a strategic link between Chelmsford, Braintree, London Stansted Airport and the wider east and southeast of England, including South Essex and the Lower Thames Crossing. The bypass will enhance access to and increase the catchment area of the new station at Beaulieu, and will provide improved connectivity to the garden communities, Braintree, Chelmsford and the wider area.

A120 Trunk Road

Essex County Council have been developing options for the upgrading of the A120 between Braintree and the A12 to a dual carriageway standard. The work has been undertaken in line with Highways England's Product Control Framework approach which it follows on all the major projects identified in the Route Investment Strategy. Highways England is content that due process has been followed. The outcome of this work was a non-statutory public consultation in Spring 2017 on five options and further development to the options to identify an Essex County Council favoured option.

Further development of the scheme will depend on the publication of the Route Investment Strategy for 2020-2025 which is expected by Spring 2020

At the time of the examination hearing sessions in January and May 2018 and the Inspector's June 2018 letter, there had been no decision by government on a future alignment for the dualled A120. ECC announced its 'favoured' route in June 2018 (following a consultation that ended in March 2018 – Route D) and this was recommended to government for inclusion in RIS2. The 'favoured' route, which runs from Galleys Corner on the edge of Braintree to a new junction with the A12 to the south of Kelvedon (and aligns with proposals put forward in the A12 HIF bid).

Communications and lobbying activity by ECC is being undertaken to support the progression of the scheme.

If the A120 Braintree to A12 upgrade is included in RIS2, the next stage would be a Preferred Route Announcement followed by a statutory public consultation with development work leading to the submission of a Development Consent Order. Typically a start of works would commence about three years following a preferred route announcement.

A120 Millennium Way Slips (Braintree)

For other works along the A120, funding has been secured for the A120 Millennium Way slips providing £4.95m from the DfT National Productivity Investment Fund for the Local Road Network, with additional funding secured from ECC (£3.5m), Braintree District Council (£2.5m), and Highways England (£3m), which has enabled the scheme to progress.

The scheme involves the construction of two new slip roads and associated works to provide access between the A120 and the B1018 Millennium Way (providing west facing slips to allow better access and help relieve congestion at this location). The scheme will ease congestion in the short term, thereby helping to improve air quality, support economic growth locally and along the A120 corridor, and assist in the delivery of new housing development in the Braintree area and the wider A120 corridor. A planning

application (CC/BTE/34/19) was submitted to ECC on 24 May 2019 and is currently being assessed. The Advance Works for the proposed scheme are expected to begin in Winter 2019 with the Main Works (construction) expected to start in Summer 2020 with a total construction period of around 12 months.

Matters to Progress in collaboration

Highways England does not object to the North Essex Authorities Local Plan section 1 and believes the strategic highway implications of the overall spatial strategy and garden communities in particular can be managed. Highways England will continue to work closely with North Essex Authorities, together with ECC (as local highway authority) to ensure that the phased development of the garden communities can be facilitated and coordinated with the A12 widening proposals.

It is agreed between the parties that any additional funding necessary for the ongoing delivery of the garden community will lie outside the funding of the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme as detailed in the Road Investment Strategy.

Signed:

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**Eric Cooper
Highways England**

Areas of Uncommon Ground

None

Conclusions and further work

The North Essex Authorities will continue to work closely with Highways England and Essex County Council to better integrate all forms of transport and improve roads and public transport and to promote cycling and walking. This will be done through:

- The Planning Authorities and ECC to continue to lobby Central Government for the inclusion of the A120 in RIS2
- Engagement and cooperative working through the North Essex Garden Communities project.
- Preparation of Strategic Growth DPDs for the three Garden Communities.
- Preparation, submission and implementation of Bids for funding towards infrastructure schemes, which assist the delivery of housing (eg Housing Infrastructure Fund).
- To continue to lobby Homes England for a successful determination for funding of the A12 – Realignment between Junction 23 – 25 HIF bid.
- To work jointly regarding the implementation of the successful A120 / A133 Link Road and Rapid Transit System HIF Bid
- The traffic impact of the new communities will need to be assessed, and mitigation developed, on the A12, A120 and their junctions

The North Essex Authorities, Essex County Council and Highways England agree that in respect to each authority's emerging Local Plans and the specific cross boundary matter of Strategic Transport, compliance with the obligations under Duty to Co-operate have been met satisfactorily.

All Local Authorities acknowledge that the Duty to Cooperate is not just a mechanism for cross-borough engagement during a Local Plan process. It is an ongoing activity that will continue beyond individual districts/boroughs submissions, and eventual adoption of a Local Plan. All parties remain committed to continue to work together outside of the Local Plan process on these important strategic matters.

Signed

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