

**North Essex Authorities**

Mr Roger Clews  
Planning Inspector  
Examination Office

**Sent by email**

29 August 2019

Dear Sir,

**Re: NEAs' July and August update on Local Plan progress**

North Essex Authorities' Section 1 Local Plan Technical Consultation

1. Following our previous monthly updates, the NEAs have formally considered the Additional Sustainability Appraisal, updated evidence base and suggested amendments to the Section 1 Local Plan at their respective public meetings throughout July and early August. We can confirm that these documents have been approved by the relevant elected Members of each of the local planning authorities for public consultation.
2. The public consultation will be carried out from 19 August to 30 September and will take a similar form to the Regulation 19 consultation that was carried out by the NEAs over summer 2017. In that respect the consultation will be hosted on an online consultation portal which will combine access of the relevant documents with a means to respond to the consultation. The portal can be found at the following address:  
<https://www.braintree.gov.uk/NEAtechS1>.
3. Wherever possible we have signposted stakeholders to Guidance Notes which have been prepared by the NEAs to assist prospective respondents (see Appendix A) and the Explanatory Note you prepared to provide context to the consultation within the Examination process.
4. In order to inform the public of the consultation the NEAs have contacted the numerous stakeholders on their respective databases, including former consultees who have expressed a desire to be kept informed of the progress of the Local Plan as well as the previous attendees to the Examination hearing sessions carried out last year. Included within those stakeholders are the statutory consultee bodies.
5. Additionally, the NEAs have issued a joint press release to raise the profile of the consultation and to reach stakeholders who are not on the NEAs' databases (see Appendix B). Braintree District Council and Colchester Borough Council have also sent a leaflet to all households within their districts informing them of the consultation and how they can respond (see Appendix B and C).

6. Following the close of the consultation period, the NEAs will collate the responses received and send these to the Planning Inspectorate, alongside the documents subject to the consultation. These will be provided in hard copy format as you have requested.

#### Announcement of successful Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) application

7. The NEAs are pleased to inform you that the HIF application for £99.9m to fund the proposed A133-A120 link road and Rapid Transit System to support the development of the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community has been successful. The NEAs will be working closely with Essex County Council to progress works on these two key pieces of strategic transport infrastructure.
8. For your reference the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's formal announcement can be found at the following address: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/600-million-boost-for-housing>.
9. The NEAs understand that the A12 HIF application is still being assessed by the Government and an announcement will be made in due course. We will keep you informed of any future updates that we receive on the outcome of that application.
10. As ever, we would appreciate any comments you may have on the content of this update. If you do have any comments, then please get in touch via the Programme Officer and we will be pleased to respond.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Goodings – Braintree District Council

Karen Syrett – Colchester Borough Council

Gary Guiver – Tendring District Council

Enclosures:

Appendix A – Local Plan consultation press release for issue 19 August 2019

Appendix B (attached as a separate document) – Colchester Borough Council's Local Plan consultation leaflet

Appendix C (attached as a separate document) – Braintree District Council's Local Plan consultation leaflet

## **Appendix A – Local Plan consultation press release for issue 19 August 2019**

### **Have your say on Garden Community evidence**

Residents across North Essex are being urged to have their say on the additional evidence being submitted to the Planning Inspector supporting the development of three new garden communities in Braintree, Colchester and Tendring.

Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council have produced the extra information requested by the Inspector last year on the joint part of the Local Plan developed by the three councils.

A six-week public consultation is being launched today (Monday 19 August) for residents to comment on this evidence, which centres on the purpose-built garden community developments.

Supported by Essex County Council, these new developments incorporate a long-term strategy – helping to provide homes, jobs and infrastructure provision ensuring North Essex grows in a more holistic way.

Built over 40-50 years, they will provide a large amount of the homes needed over that time, reducing the need to expand existing towns and villages. Through building at scale, the plans also ensure that new developments come with a mixture of the different affordable homes, schools, health facilities, green spaces and employment land needed for the new communities.

Following an examination of the joint plans last year the Planning Inspector raised several areas in which he wished to see further evidence – especially in terms of viability, rapid transit and sustainability.

The additional evidence compiled by the three councils to address the Inspector's questions show the plans are viable, sustainable and can provide a significant boost to the local economy, providing at least one job per home in the local area – higher than traditional development. They offer a wide variety of homes, including a minimum of 30% set aside as affordable housing.

The issues addressed in the new evidence include:

- a new rapid transport network system which would grow alongside North Essex reducing congestion, improving air quality and providing quick and easy access into and out of Colchester and Braintree linking with other public transport hubs. This would include segregated lanes for public transport and ensure the infrastructure is in place so it can provide alternative forms of transport like a trackless tram scheme.
- information showing the councils' infrastructure-led approach is viable, meaning the schools, health, and leisure facilities needed to support the stand-alone settlements would be developed at the same time as the homes – not afterwards as is the usual practice.
- an enhanced assessment of the environmental effects, and the social and economic issues associated with the proposals.

Cllr Mark Cory, Leader of Colchester Borough Council, said: "The Local Plan process is complex, but it is vital we get local engagement on the future of development and public

scrutiny of the new evidence. The Planning Inspector wanted more information on our ambitions to provide the homes, jobs and infrastructure needed for the North Essex residents of the future.

“It is absolutely vital that we get Government support to deliver the infrastructure we need to turn the principals of the garden communities into reality; otherwise they cannot work. Working together with the other councils we have developed detailed responses to the Inspector’s questions and are urging residents across North Essex to have their say on them to help inform his decision.”

Cllr Graham Butland, Leader of Braintree District Council, said: “At least 716 homes have to be built every year in our district. That is a given. We have a choice – add them to our existing villages and towns or think more strategically. Garden communities mean we can plan for infrastructure in a joined-up way from the start with today’s modern requirements in mind.

“Every five years the Local Plan rolls forward, and more homes need to be provided. By choosing garden communities now, we are protecting our towns and villages in the long term. We have now published a huge amount of evidence to support our garden community plans – I would encourage all residents to take a look.”

Cllr Neil Stock, Leader of Tendring District Council, said: “As always, we are keen to hear residents’ views on the new evidence created in support of our draft Local Plan, and consultation responses will be passed to the Planning Inspector when he re-examines our vision.

“Our robust and innovative garden community plans form a relatively small part of this draft Local Plan but will evidently set us on a path for sustainable growth for the future.”

The findings of the revised and new Local Plan evidence have been considered by councillors of the three councils over the last month. The comments received through the consultation will be supplied to the Inspector ahead of the re-opening of the Local Plan examination expected to be held this winter.

The consultation will run from Monday 19 August until 5pm on Monday 30 September. Residents can make their views known by going to [www.braintree.gov.uk/NEAtechS1](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/NEAtechS1)

ENDS



# THE LOCAL PLAN

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2019



## SEE INSIDE:

- What is a Local Plan?
- The story so far...
- Why garden communities?
- Have your say



More information at: [www.braintree.gov.uk/NEAtechS1](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/NEAtechS1) or  
[www.colchester.gov.uk/local-plan](http://www.colchester.gov.uk/local-plan)

# THE LOCAL PLAN

## WHAT IS A LOCAL PLAN?

A Local Plan is the basis for the future development of homes, employment, business and much more. Planning applications, whatever their size and proposed use, are assessed against the policies contained in the Local Plan.

Having a Local Plan is really important because it sets the direction for future development but it also gives us more power to stop inappropriate development.

Local Plans are not just about new homes but must ensure that housing growth is supported by infrastructure, jobs and community facilities.

The three councils have been working together to provide more evidence for the Planning Inspector to address his concerns. The Local Plan process was officially paused while this additional evidence was collected.

The additional evidence was published online in June 2019. The evidence has been considered by Colchester Borough Council's Local Plan Committee in July 2019. The committee agreed to consult on the additional evidence.

The evidence was also approved by elected members at Braintree and Tendring District Councils.

The evidence is now out to public consultation **until 5pm Monday 30th September 2019.**

Everyone who has previously made representations on the Section 1 Plan has been informed of the consultation. However, we have also produced this document in order to highlight the consultation to all residents in the district.

After the consultation has closed the Planning Inspector intends to hold further hearing sessions as part of his examination of the soundness and legal compliance of the Section 1 Plan.

Those responding to the consultation are invited to indicate whether they wish to appear at further hearing sessions.

Take a look at **page 4** for more details of the consultation.

**Section 2 relates to sites for development, housing, employment, regeneration solely in the Colchester borough. The examination for Section 2 will follow.**

## THE STORY SO FAR:

**Every council has to plan for additional new homes.**

Colchester Borough Council, Braintree District Council and Tendring District Council have been working together since 2015 to make sure development is beneficial for North Essex. This resulted in a draft strategic Section 1 Local Plan which is shared by all three councils within their Local Plans. The Section 1 Local Plan includes policies on cross boundary issues including infrastructure and housing. It also includes proposals for three new garden communities.

The Local Plan has undergone a number of rounds of public consultation and was submitted to the Secretary of State in October 2017. A Planning Inspector was appointed to carry out an independent examination to look at Section 1 of the Local Plans and examination sessions were held in January 2018 and May 2018.

Following the hearings, the Planning Inspector wrote to the councils to say he agreed with the councils' figures for housing growth up until 2033.

This means at least 2,186 homes need to be built across North Essex each year.

### That means:

- 920 each year in the Colchester Borough
- 716 each year in the Braintree District
- 550 each year in the Tendring District

The Planning Inspector also said that while he commended the councils' ambitions for high-quality, strategic-scale development in North Essex he raised concerns with some elements of the Local Plan specifically around the garden communities. He suggested further steps that he considered necessary in order for the Section 1 part of the plan to be made sound and legally-compliant.

You can read all correspondence with the Planning Inspector at our joint online site:

[www.braintree.gov.uk/lpexamination](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/lpexamination)





# WHY GARDEN COMMUNITIES?

Colchester, Braintree and Tendring have a legal requirement to provide for more than 2,000 homes each year. There are limited 'brownfield' sites available, so the options are effectively either allowing towns and villages to continue to expand, which is not particularly sustainable and has a big impact on services and infrastructure or look at creating new communities.

It is less sustainable to keep adding large scale housing developments on the edges of our urban areas. These are for the most part small market towns and villages with limited capacity in terms of shops, services and transport links and they are not capable of dealing with unlimited population increases.

The garden communities, which would be built over 40-50 years, are the long-term strategy of the three North Essex councils, in partnership with Essex County Council, to help meet the future growth of the area in a more strategic way.

The three garden communities (Colchester/Braintree borders up to 24,000 homes, Tendring/Colchester borders up to 9,000 homes and West of Braintree up to 13,500 homes) are an opportunity to plan for infrastructure in a more joined up, considered and comprehensive way.

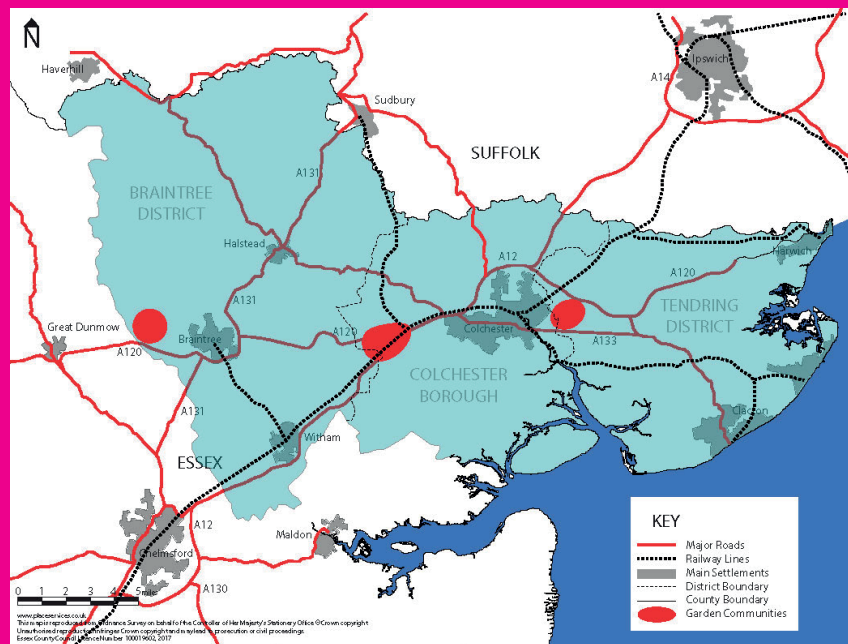
Residents are rightly concerned about their access to education, health care and transport. The garden communities offer the chance to plan all this in from the start, an active, inclusive whole community built with today's modern requirements in mind. This would mean essential facilities are available as communities grow rather than delivered late, in a piecemeal way, or never provided.

If the garden communities are not progressed, then those homes – both now but more crucially in

future years – will need to be built elsewhere within North Essex. This will most likely be by expanding our towns and villages.

The garden communities make a relatively small contribution to the current Local Plan but every five years the Local Plan must be rolled forward and more homes need to be provided. The continued expansion of our existing towns and villages is unsustainable and by making decisions now we are securing the long term growth of the district for the benefit of all residents.

## MAP OF PROPOSED GARDEN COMMUNITIES



## WHAT CONSULTATIONS HAVE ALREADY TAKEN PLACE?

*The Local Plan has been a chance for the whole community to talk about the housing, employment and infrastructure we need.*

**These are the consultations carried out:**

**2014** Call for Sites

**2015** Issues and Options consultation – 650 responses back

**2016** Draft Local Plan consultation – 3,000 responses back.

**2017** Publication Draft Local Plan consultation – Over 5,000 responses including petitions.

**2017/18** Issues and Options consultation for each of the garden communities – more than 700 responses back.



# THE CONSULTATION

## TECHNICAL SECTION 1 EXAMINATION 2019

This consultation is on the additional evidence requested by the Planning Inspector. Detailed proposals will come later, reflecting the needs of each garden community.

### WE ARE CONSULTING ON THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:

#### **Additional Sustainability Appraisal**

This is an assessment of the environmental effects, and social and economic issues of policies, proposals and alternative strategies, used to inform the preparation of Local Plans.

#### **Habitats Regulations Assessment North Essex Authorities Strategic S1 Local Plan**

This is an assessment of the likely effects of development proposed in the Local Plan on wildlife sites of European importance for example the Blackwater Estuary.

#### **Modal Share Strategy for the North Essex Garden Communities**

This is a document looking at the way people can be influenced to travel using alternatives to the car.

#### **Infrastructure Order of Costs Estimate**

A review of the cost of infrastructure works associated with the development of homes and jobs across the three new garden communities in North Essex.

#### **Build Out Rates at the Garden Communities**

This document reviews evidence and publications which explore how to boost housing buildings rates and evidence on high build out rates which have been achieved in other parts of the country.

#### **Delivery Mechanisms Position Statement**

This is a document looking at the available delivery mechanisms for the garden communities.

#### **Section 1 Viability Assessment Update**

This is a document which tests the economic viability of garden community proposals taking into consideration updated cost and value assumptions and including the costs of the Rapid Transit Study.

#### **State Aid Position Statement**

A brief summary of the application of state aid law to the North Essex garden community proposals.

#### **Employment Provision for the North Essex Garden Communities**

This is a document which sets out the amount of employment land required at each garden community.

#### **Infrastructure Planning, Phasing and Delivery**

This report demonstrates the phased manner in which infrastructure will be delivered alongside new homes at the garden communities.

#### **North Essex Rapid Transit System: from Vision to Delivery**

This explains how a high quality, frequent and rapid public transport system could be created.


#### **Proposed Amendments to the Section 1 Plan**

The North Essex Authorities have also compiled a table of proposed amendments to the Section 1 Plan which aim to address certain issues identified by the Planning Inspector, partners and consultees.

All these documents can be viewed online at

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Get in touch with the team:

 [planning.policy@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@colchester.gov.uk)

 01206 282476/473/975

Planning Policy  
Colchester Borough Council  
Rowan House,  
33 Sheepen Road  
Colchester  
CO3 3WG

The evidence is now out to public consultation until 5pm on Monday 30th September 2019.

**NEED THIS DOCUMENT IN A DIFFERENT FORMAT? PLEASE CALL 01206 282476/473/975**







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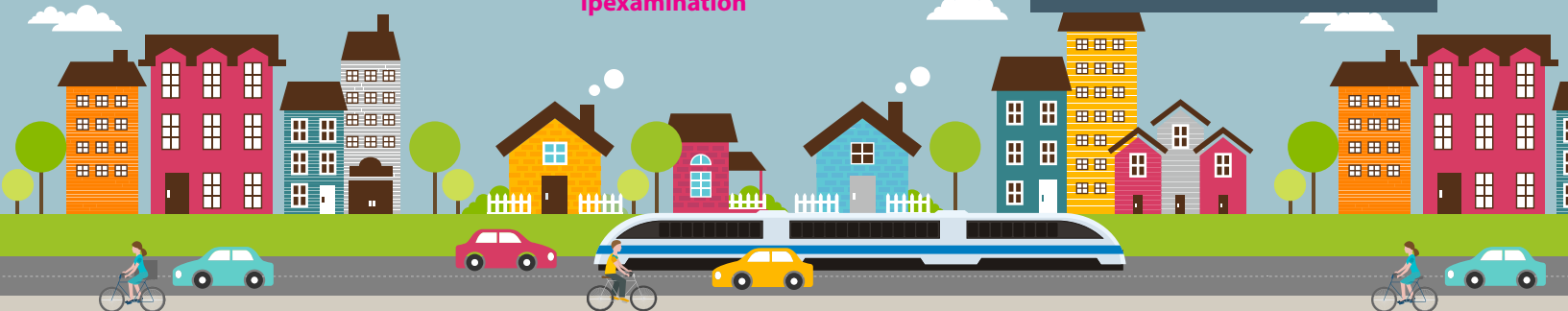
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Get in touch with the team:

 [localplan@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:localplan@braintree.gov.uk)

 01376 552525

Planning Policy  
Braintree District Council  
Causeway House  
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Braintree  
Essex  
CM7 9HB

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