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 Greater Anglia (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 Greater Anglia (GA – as the train operating company). 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 Great Eastern mainline railway, including any progress since the hearing session in May 2018, and the Inspector's June 2018 letter. 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 have held a series of discussions with the transport authorities, Essex County Council, Highways England, Greater Anglia and Network Rail 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 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 North Essex Authorities will continue to work closely with government departments, Highways England, Essex County Council, Network Rail, rail operators and other partners 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;
- Working with the Great Eastern Mainline Task Force to articulate the benefits of investment in rail to support growth and commissioning of studies (eg. Great Eastern Main Line Study - Railway investment choices, July 2019); and
- Joint preparation and submission of Bids for funding towards infrastructure schemes, which assist the delivery of housing, primarily the Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

In the next 20 years there will be a need for over 180,000 new homes in Greater Essex. It is therefore vital that the infrastructure in the county and the surrounding areas can keep pace with this growth. Investing in strategic infrastructure through the Housing Infrastructure Fund will bring forward housing growth; boost economic growth; improve access to international gateways; improve journey reliability and network resilience; and enhance connectivity between key urban centres.

Chelmsford North East Bypass and Beaulieu Railway Station (£218m)

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.

Great Eastern Mainline Railway as well as associated branch lines (Braintree, Sudbury and Colchester – Clacton)

The Essex rail network is a major artery linking London to East Anglia. An efficient rail network is essential to help Essex businesses to be productive, innovate and grow, and to attract investment and unlock sustainable growth opportunities particularly within the emerging Garden Community proposals. It provides access to wider employment opportunities for residents, enables local businesses to trade with London based businesses, and encourages new businesses to establish in Essex benefitting from our proximity of London. The economy of London also benefits by having access to the labour market from Essex. The 2011 Census records over 16,000 people across the three North Essex areas reporting that their main mode of travel to work was either the train or the underground, representing just over 7% of people travelling to work. The 2019 Great Eastern Mainline Study (2019) predicted demand for rail travel on the Great Eastern mainline to increase by 40-60% over the next 25 years.

Rail provides an essential link to and between numerous economic centres within the County and to the City of London. Presently 50% of Stansted passengers arrive by public transport, the highest of any major UK airport, but increased capacity, faster services and earlier departures from London are all required if the airport is to grow and maximise the potential of its direct link to the heart of

the City of London. Colchester railway station is a key interchange between intercity and outer suburban trains to Clacton, Walton and Ipswich. The station is located between Colchester town centre and the North Colchester Growth Area where again significant growth is planned. The University of Essex Knowledge Gateway, to the east of Colchester is a dedicated research park offering the potential for 400,000 sq ft of mixed commercial space and up to 2,000 high value jobs linked to research strengths at the University.

As indicated above, ECC has been successful in securing monies towards a new railway station at Beaulieu in north east Chelmsford on the Great Eastern Main Line (GEML). The station was granted outline planning permission in 2014. It is a longstanding aspiration of Essex County Council for a new station to serve development at Chelmsford, where some 10,000 new homes are underway/proposed, along with significant commercial development (85,000 sq m). The station will help to relieve pressure on Chelmsford station, the busiest station in Essex and busiest two platform station on the National Rail network outside of Greater London, currently handling more than 8 million passenger trips per year. In addition to providing sustainable transport for future residents at Beaulieu, the station is expected to facilitate commuting to the proposed employment areas on the site. It is also expected that, with the location of the station being very close to major highways such as the A12, it is likely to be attractive to new and existing rail users across mid-Essex, some of whom might divert from using other stations on the GEML. The Station will have three platforms, car parking, a public transport interchange, cycling facilities and a turnback/passing loop for trains. The layout provides operational resilience on the network from Norwich to London that currently operates near capacity, which would support housing growth along the length of the line. The Station will be a rail head so some services can start and terminate at Beaulieu as they do today at Chelmsford. This will ensure excellent journey times into London for the new communities.

The planned timescale for delivery of the new station is outlined below.

- Governance for Railway Investment Programme (GRIP) Stage 3: Single option selection and development – May 2020
- GRIP Sage 4: Obtain consents (Transport and Works Act Order and Network Change – April 2021
- GRIP Stages 5-8: Detailed design, construction, testing and commissioning. Handover to Network Rail – December 2025

The importance of rail travel to Essex extends beyond the larger towns and cities to many smaller towns and interchanges that have benefitted from good rail links to London. Marks Tey is a typical example with in excess of 500,000 passenger movements from the station each year. The station itself provides an important interchange with the Sudbury branch. Braintree is served by rail from Witham station on the main line. Through trains to and from London run during peak hours with a shuttle service in the off peak. The four stations on the branch generate approximately 910,000 passenger movements per annum, with nearly 800,000 movements through Braintree station.

The Great Eastern Main Line Taskforce, led by local Members of Parliament, seeks to develop the strong economic case for investment in the line. The GEML Economic Benefits study underpins the work of the Taskforce and identifies more than £4bn economic benefits related to the delivery of a package of infrastructure improvements, additional services and faster trains benefitting all passengers using the line. Key infrastructure schemes identified by the 2019 Great Eastern Mainline Study include:

- Bow Junction remodelling.

- Loops between Chelmsford and Witham (Beaulieu Park)

- Haughley Junction doubling

- Colchester – Shenfield headway reductions

- Ipswich - Haughley loops

The Anglia Route Study was published by Network Rail in March 2016. It sets out a vision for the next 10 to 30 years of a much busier railway, with investment enabling faster, more frequent and reliable journeys. It presents choices for funders to meet this future demand. Improvements are also identified for the Ely area which allows the opportunity for more freight to pass this way in the future.

The Anglia Route Study shows that improvements are required along the Line to promote growth and provide a faster more competitive service across the region. The Study identifies a package of improvements necessary to respond to the need for increased capacity, which are seen as priorities to enable growth, improve services and journey reliability. These will be progressed by Network Rail.

A new East Anglia passenger franchise was awarded to Greater Anglia in 2016 for a 9 year period. The franchise includes a commitment to introduce a completely new fleet of trains from 2019, in addition with timetable improvements and additional services, which will significantly increase passenger capacity. The new trains are currently being introduced, starting with rural services out of Norwich. The new Stadler Intercity trains are presently undergoing local testing. It is expected that the new Intercity trains will be introduced from Autumn 2019. The new Bombardier suburban trains that will provide most services to/from Essex are expected to be introduced during 2020. Greater Anglia plan to phase out the entire current fleet over the next 18 months, and replace with the new rolling stock.

The Great Eastern Main Line Study (July 2019) has been facilitated by Network Rail and developed in partnership with the county councils of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, the Department for Transport, the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, Greater Anglia and the Great Eastern Main Line Task Force. The GEML Study focuses on the long-term capacity needs of the railway on this key route in the East of England, considering the expected growth in rail passenger demand over a 25 year period, and the likely increase in train services and changes to the rail network to support this growth.

The new rolling stock will improve train capacity along with the frequency of services into London, and provide improved reliability and resilience. The GEML study (July 2019) has only assessed the rolling stock changes proposed in terms of passenger capacity. The new rolling stock will increase the seating capacity on the GEML and may provide a journey time benefit, however, this has not been investigated due to timings for the new rolling stock not being confirmed for input into the study. The percentage change in seating capacity per train between the old and new rolling stock is identified below.

Table 3: Percentage change in seating between old and new rolling stock		
Suburban	17% - 36% increase in seating	164 - 305 extra seats
Inter-city	22% increase in seating	139 extra seats
Note: Suburban services is shown as a range as there are a number of different rolling stock types currently running with each having a varied seating capacity		

The intercity trains will run the Norwich – Liverpool St route calling at Colchester and Manningtree plus some calls at Chelmsford. The suburban trains will serve all other stations as well as the above, including Marks Tey. These trains will make more frequent station stops and have a higher seating capacity than the longer distance Intercity trains.

The GEML Taskforce (including ECC) is working with Network Rail and with guidance from DfT to prepare a Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) to support investment in the line. It is expected that the SOBC will be considered for investment via the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) process with the "Decision to Develop" being considered during 2020. The GEML taskforce partners are also working with Network Rail to refine scheme options. In addition to the projects listed above Network Rail is examining options to deliver capacity at London Liverpool Street and TfL is undertaking similar work at London Stratford.

The GEML Study also indicates that a further, more detailed, assessment, which involves a concept timetable looking to adapt the existing timetable for future growth, will be investigated. This will help determine more clearly the priority of enhancements when the timetable is allowed greater flexibility. Options around service provision and new infrastructure for the proposed new station at Beaulieu could provide an opportunity for this.

Areas of Uncommon Ground

None

Conclusions and further work

The North Essex Authorities will continue to work collaboratively with government departments, ECC, Network Rail, Greater Anglia and other partners (including developers) to better integrate all forms of transport and improve roads and public transport and to promote cycling and walking. This will be done through:

- Lobbying Central Government through the Great Eastern Mainline Task Force for investment in rail;
- Engagement and cooperative working through the North Essex Garden Communities project;
- Preparation of Strategic Growth DPDs for the three Garden Communities; and
- Preparation, submission and implementation of Bids for funding towards infrastructure schemes, which assist the delivery of housing (eg Housing Infrastructure Fund).

The North Essex Authorities, Essex County Council, Network Rail and Greater Anglia 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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