

**Examination of the North Essex Authorities  
Shared Strategic (Section 1) Local Plan**

**Andrewsfield New Settlement Consortium & Countryside Properties**

**Matter 2: Employment Provision for the Proposed Garden Communities**

**Responses to Hearing Statements**

**Question 6: Is there clear justification for selecting the comparator locations on p55 of EXD/052, rather than other comparator locations ?**

**Response to Answer 6 by Shalford Parish Council:**

Whilst the NEAs will respond to this issue more generally, from our knowledge of Chelmsford and Brentwood these two comparator locations, identified in EB/009 (2017), are unsuitable due to the closer proximity of both of those locations, and their speed of connectivity, to London and the considerable employment opportunities that London provides. The three proposed North Essex Garden Communities are not within such easy commuting distance of London, instead they benefit from existing and growing employment opportunities along the A120 from west to east at Stansted Airport, Skyline 120 and Braintree, Colchester, and Harwich.

**Response to Answer 6 by CAUSE:**

CAUSE indicate (page 2 Cause hearing statement) that the barriers to growth in North Essex cited in EXD/052 including congestion on roads and trains, and skills shortages, are set out 'at some length' in a new report titled North Essex Economic Strategy, October 2019.

This is an inaccurate misrepresentation of the North Essex Economic Strategy report which actually sets out the positive steps and measures being taken to ensure continued economic growth in North Essex by breaking down existing barriers.

Paragraph 4.5 of the North Essex Economic Strategy does recognise growth opportunities being limited by capacity constraints in terms of transport connectivity, although also due to access to land notably where businesses reach a stage at which they need to expand. The three North Essex Garden Communities will provide extensive areas of land suitable for employment development, including up to 9 hectares of land for employment uses at the WBGC within the Plan period. The employment land will be flexible and capable of responding to market changes and demand. It is envisaged that the WBGC can successfully deliver a range of employment land uses, in keeping with the success of Skyline 120 Business Park adjacent the highly successful Great Notley Garden Village, delivered by Countryside Properties.

Between 2004 and 2017 Countryside developed over 50,000sq.m of new business space at Skyline 120 Business Park, Braintree. Skyline 120 is located only 2 miles from the WBGC. Countryside are experienced commercial property developers (as well as residential property developers), within the local Braintree and Essex business market. Countryside has delivered a bespoke and landscape led business park at Skyline 120 providing businesses with a choice of modern quality warehouse, office and industrial accommodation. The scale of development proposed at WBGC is of a very similar quantum to Skyline. Both sites are strategic locations in the A120 corridor, a key arterial road in the county, 20 minutes from London Stansted Airport and 20 minutes from the M11 motorway, linking the UK's south and midlands. The WBGC is less than an hour from the east coast and Thames Gateway deep sea ports. Skyline 120, akin to WBGC, provides a modern attractive working environment next to Great Notley Garden Village. At Skyline Countryside offered property solutions particularly suited to (although not limited to) businesses looking to retain freehold ownership of their real estate, which has been very well received. Countryside's strategy at WBGC would be to continue the evolution of successful precedents set at Skyline 120 in relation to masterplanning, specification, design codes and buildings of a wide range of sizes to suit different types of businesses with both freehold and leasehold options. Skyline 120 is home to a mix of businesses taking advantage of its strategic location including:

- East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust HART facility;
- Carillion Energy Services, one of the UK's largest installers of renewable technologies;
- Coopers of Stortford, a distribution warehouse for a regional home and garden retailer;
- Delamode, headquarters for an international logistics company; and
- TR Fastenings, global industrial fastenings company supplying over 150 million components every day.

Skyline 120 provides a modern attractive working environment including:

- High-quality landscaped and masterplanned environment;

- Well specified and designed buildings; and
- Wide range of accommodation available to suit all sizes and types of businesses, freehold or leasehold

A variety of office space has been developed at Skyline 120, ranging from small office units in a landscaped courtyard environment to larger headquarters buildings. The most recent phase, Nexus, provides a range of opportunities for the development of bespoke warehouse and office buildings to suit individual occupiers' requirements on either a freehold or leasehold basis providing for warehouse requirements, small light industrial and bespoke office buildings.

A further extension to the business park is planned on land to the west of the A131 at Great Notley with the site currently being taken forward by BDC.

Countryside's development at Skyline 120 is evidence that construction of in excess of 50,000 sq m at the WBGC can be delivered within a similar 12 to 14 year timeframe. Furthermore, it is important to note that an element of Skyline 120 was delivered during the height of the 2008 to 2009 recession. During this challenging period the speed of delivery at Skyline 120 was slowed, which was mirrored at a national level. Countryside are confident that the proposed quantum of development at the WBGC is appropriate to the Plan period to 2033. It is vital that flexibility to adapt to changing business trends, including concepts such as autonomous electric vehicles and logistics by drones, is considered from the outset. The residential and employment must be masterplanned to co-exist in order to thrive.

The North Essex Economic Strategy also sets out additional measures that are planned through more sustainable transport solutions achieving greater public transport use and ensuring that digital connectivity is implemented through new developments.

The North Essex Economic Strategy also identifies solutions and actions to break down barriers to growth within North Essex, including the Garden Communities representing a key contributor by reducing the need for people to travel long distances to places of work. In addition, the Strategy seeks to ensure that skill shortages are addressed by embedding educational and training facilities within North Essex including through the aforementioned STEM centre, at Stansted Airport College and the Energy Skills Centre at Harwich.

The proposed WBGC development will build on the success of employment and training uses in nearby Braintree, at Skyline 120 and Stansted as well as releasing land at the WBGC development for businesses to become established or to relocate to as part of the A120 Stansted to Harwich growth corridor. The proposed WBGC will also allow those existing businesses operating within the WBGC area of search to flourish, as well as ensuring that businesses and new homes are provided with superfast broadband connectivity.

Word Count (responses): 1,068

December 2019