EXD077 – Note on method of estimation of Garden Communities employment sectoral shares in EB/081

Response from Wivenhoe Town Council

We are not repeating our varied and detailed points made at the hearing or our previous submissions with broad themes of the skills gap, the current employment situation at the University of Essex and Knowledge Gateway, absence of any organisation willing to create employment at the GC's at this stage and the unacceptable risks represented by the over ambitious target of one job per household.

However, we did raise the issue of automation at the hearing. To clarify this point, we refer to EXD052 Economic Vision and Strategy for the North Essex Sub-Region by CEBR (EXD/052). Page 146 Appendix 3 Analysis of jobs at risk from automation. The chart on this page places 'Information and Communication' at a % high risk of losing 27.30% and 'Business services activities' at a % high risk of losing 24.26%. We are unable to determine if these figures have been factored in to the 30% forecast for each category in Table 2 of EB/081. This is notwithstanding the CEBR observed risk of being reliant on sectors forecast to diminish by significant amounts.

Our representations regarding EXD077 are;

- Employment shares have been chosen subjectively without the benefit of structured work to assess the employment identities of each GC. It is simply too early in the master planning process to apply any certainty to employment shares.
- Use of in-house modelling does not allow for optimism bias, comparison with other models or for external scrutiny.
- The projected 'Information and Communication" sector share of 30% is clearly over ambitious and we could find no evidence to validate this projection.
- The above also applies to 'Business services activities' and 'Public administration;education;health"
- EXD077 asserts "ONS data on UK GVA/employee (i.e. productivity) by sector in 2016 was applied to the sectoral GVA projections". This is somewhat worrying as the first employment spaces will not be available until 2024\5 which would render this ONS dataset as historic.
- EXD077 states "Using the sectoral employment forecasts for the comparators as a baseline, adjustments were made for each Garden Community, reflecting CEBR's judgement of their potential sectoral strengths given their location and linkages". The inference here is that the Bus Rapid Transport (BTS) would be successful and we feel that this is not justifiable given the inherent weakness of BTS as a mass transport vehicle and the likely high percentage of in-bound commuting.
- 2071 is over half a century away. We appreciate that the length of the plan period presents a multitude of issues and uncertainties and that this was raised in various guises during the hearing session but we are adamant that is impossible to gaze into a crystal ball and predict that far into the future for a place that does not even currently exist.

Summary

We have zero faith that the employment reality of this section of North Essex can be transformed to the degree where CEBR projections can be met.