

Wivenhoe Society

Response to the Issues and Options consultation

The comments focus on those issues which are of particular relevance to Wivenhoe. There are three particular areas of concern

- 1 The housing targets for Colchester as a whole are unsustainably high and not based on firm evidence
- 2 The proposed garden suburb to the east of Colchester does not constitute sustainable development
- 3 Proportionate growth of the Wivenhoe Rural District Centre is not feasible.

We also wish to comment on question 27 with respect to the coastal protection belt.

1. Comment on Housing targets

(The relevant pages are page 16: Housing, key issues, also relevant headed “Why Growth” and page 13 paragraph 6

On page 16 one of the key housing issues identified is

Development of realistic housing targets for both market and affordable housing.

Question 9 asks: Do you have any thoughts on how the Plan could and should address these issues?)

The proposal seems to be that Colchester should be looking to build around 1000 new homes a year. We wish to query this target. We recognise the need for additional housing both to meet local needs and national demand but the consultation document does not explain how much of the proposed growth in housing is needed to meet the natural increase in Colchester’s population and how much is needed to meet projected inward migration. The ONS figures included in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment would appear to be based on the naive assumption that Colchester will continue to grow at the same rate as in the last decade. The ONS can predict natural population increase but is not in a position to model net immigration rates to a particular area so it has to rely on past trends. What is the ONS justification for assuming that Colchester’s population will increase by 31.6% between 2010 and 2035 (figure quoted in the Strategic Housing Assessment) other than a trend extrapolation? Colchester has grown faster than most other areas in Essex and the Country as a whole and the assumption appears to be that it must continue to do so. The Borough should question whether it is appropriate and sustainable for Colchester to bear a disproportionate share of the required national growth in the housing stock in the

future. Should we not be aiming to achieve an overall growth by the end of planning period that is equal to the projected growth rate of Essex or aim perhaps for an overall growth rate from 2001 to 2032 that equals the projected rate of for the East of England over this period? Since Colchester grew at above the average rate for the region between 2001 and 2011 this would imply a slightly lower than average growth rate for Colchester in the next two decades. A keynote of the National Planning Policy Framework is sustainability. Given the constraints on the road infrastructure mentioned elsewhere in the consultation document, congestion in urban Colchester and problems with air quality, a continued above average rate of growth for Colchester would not seem to be strategically sensible or sustainable.

Comments on options

Question 29 and question 30, page 50

2 The suggested garden suburb to the East of Colchester:

The TCPA in its document “Creating Garden Cities and Suburbs Today: a guide for Councils” [http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/Creating Garden Cities and Suburbs Today - a guide for councils.pdf](http://www.tcpa.org.uk/data/files/Creating_Garden_Cities_and_Suburbs_Today_-_a_guide_for_councils.pdf) makes a case for garden suburbs but warns of the dangers of creating a bolt-on suburb. If a new garden suburb could be built in say a five year time span complete with schools, shops, social facilities etc then it could possibly be sustainable. In practice garden suburbs/new towns have developed by growing an existing small settlement and adding extra facilities as the population grew. The land to the north of the A133 is a completely green field site with no existing amenities. If houses were built at the rate of 200 to 300 a year (the figure suggested by the would-be developers to the Wivenhoe Town Plan steering group) for a large number of years there would be an insufficient number of houses to support a viable set of community facilities or public transport service and residents would be totally reliant on cars. These would add to the congestion on the already overstretched A133.

The proposal to develop this site is partly initiated by Tendring. While there is a duty to co-operate with the neighbours the neighbours need to justify why co-operation is required. Tendring residents are reluctant to see any of their existing communities grow but effectively increasing the size of Colchester does not seem an appropriate solution. There are potential sites in Tendring with rail access (which the land beside the A133 does not have) and with links to the A120. Weeley is an obvious candidate.

The A133 is already very congested at peak hours. The consultation document talks of creating “new public transport” with “a high frequency rapid transport system” linking to the University, railway stations (possibly with an additional station though this presents logistical problems according to Abellio) and the town centre. Presumably the rapid transport system means buses. It is worth looking at Wivenhoe’s modal choices in this context. The 2011 census data on travel to work for Wivenhoe Parish can be viewed at

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=7&b=11130841&c=wivenhoe&d=16&g=6424629&i=1001x1003x1006&k=travel+to+work&m=0&r=1&s=1423992943632&enc=1&domainId=61&dsFamilyId=2567>

Wivenhoe has a station and a frequent (every 10 minutes) and relatively fast bus service to the town centre using Boundary Road rather than Clingoe Hill. Only 13% of journeys to work in 2011 were by train and only 7% were by bus whereas 62% were by car. In Wivenhoe the further people live from the station the less likely they are to use the train to go to work even though the station is on the bus route. Based on the Wivenhoe figures the proposed 6000 houses would generate around 4000 journey to work trips by car many of which would add to traffic flows/jams at the Greenstead roundabout.

Part of the proposed area of development contains ancient woodlands and wildlife sites and is an important recreational area for people living in Greenstead. There is strong support for this to be a country park.

The consultation document suggests that possibly 3000 houses could be built as Colchester's share of the development. If a strategic break both to protect the Salary Brook area and to provide physical separation with the rest of Colchester were put in place there would not appear to be sufficient land to accommodate both the suggested expansion of the Knowledge Gateway type employment and 3,000 houses. Is the suggestion that part of Tendring should be incorporated into Colchester? Is it feasible to have a settlement area/community that is partly in one Local Authority and partly in another?

The suggested garden suburb to the West has both some existing social infrastructure, a good railway link and good road links and possibly contains fewer environmentally sensitive sites. The Society would wish to press for options 2A or 2B to be adopted.

3 Proportional growth of District Centres

(Growth strategy options page 40)

All the options include proportional expansion of Rural District Centres of which Wivenhoe is one. There are constraints on how much Wivenhoe can grow consistent with its remaining a separate rural settlement, protecting the coastal heritage and conforming to the Essex Minerals Local Plan (which neutralises one potential building site). While Wivenhoe can make some contribution to housing needs, a growth rate equal to that proposed for Colchester as a whole would not be sustainable.

4. Coastal Protection Belt

We note that defining the purpose and extent of the coastal protection belt is one of the key issues identified and question 27 asks for views on this. We are somewhat concerned

that the sketch maps for the options appear to have reduced the coastal protection belt showing only land to the river side of the railway line in Wivenhoe, but we are assuming that this was for the sake of clarity in the maps and not a policy proposal. We are extremely fortunate to have preserved so much of the green backdrops to the estuary and the tidal part of the river. These green slopes are very important to the vistas from Wivenhoe and towards Wivenhoe from the river, the river side paths and from Rowhedge. While a small area of what is currently coastal protection belt in Wivenhoe is not visible from the river and does not have views of the river/estuary the majority of the currently designated land does and should continue to be protected for the benefit of future generations.