

## RESPONSE FROM LANGHAM PC TO CBC ISSUES AND OPTIONS QUESTIONS (Feb 2015)

1. Yes. However, it is important to ensure that the plan covers an extended period but it is unclear how it can be protected from future new government legislation which needs to be considered so that the plan is not revisited partway through an agreed cycle.
2. Yes. This should also include Neighbourhood Plans and Village Design Statements which must be taken into account.

The scope of the evidence base seems quite comprehensive but it is unclear how the evidence base all fits together and in instances where two papers create conflict which would have the highest priority. A flow chart which shows the process and where the evidence feeds in would help to make this clearer. We think the list should also include some kind of analysis of how the local health service, which is already failing, will cope with the expected expansion over the next 15 years.

When will the evidence base be published and when will consultation take place on the Settlement Boundary Review and SHLAA?

3. Yes.
4. No. It is impossible to answer this question until the expansion areas are identified. As an example if development is agreed on the boundary between Colchester & Tendring then the infrastructure to support this and the transport links would predominantly be in Colchester. So we would have to say that all the cross boundary issues have not been identified.

Also attention should be given to the risk of *over urbanisation* and urban sprawl brought about by separate Local Plans formulated by CBC, Braintree and Tendring, especially at key road and rail links.

5. Yes. There is a concern that planning requests that failed under the previous Local Plan/Core Strategy will merely be re-presented although the grounds on which they were denied have not changed. One clear area would be a sustainability appraisal that did not support the previous application or a submission that was outside of a settlement boundary. Re-submitted requests, with associated appeals, could radically change the landscape and make it difficult to move forward in a sensible way in the shorter term.
6. Care should be taken to ensure the provision of green space, possibly *via a Garden City* model in any newly developed large urban settlements. The Local Plan should also ensure that transport, health and recreation facilities will be adequate for any projected growth.
7. Yes. Village Design Statements, Parish Plans & Neighbourhood Plans. Also the vision of the future should be supported by documents that show how the Health infrastructure will support the growth over the next 15 years and be at the centre of a thriving community. Having said that we accept the comments made on page 36 that little information is available at this time.
8. Yes. However, any proposed development in rural settlements should be in keeping with the size and character of the settlement and recognise the low density of housing in many villages in the borough.

9. Encouragement of mixed development in locations that are sustainable e.g. retirement, market, affordable housing in rural settlements. Provision of appropriate health and recreation facilities to support any such development.

The Plan should also recognise that villages at a distance of 5 miles plus from Colchester centre are unattractive to residents seeking affordable housing because of all the facilities that are absent in them.

10. It should be recognised that North Colchester has now become *over developed* and any further such development (Options 3a, 3b), will result in urban sprawl across the most picturesque landscape in the borough and close to the Dedham AONB

The issue covered by m) “supporting people who want to build their own homes” is a double edged sword. Quite often new home projects are outside of the settlement boundaries or (as we see quite regularly) involves knocking down smaller properties to make way for large executive homes. The main housing requirement identified for Langham is retirement properties, smaller/start up homes or affordable housing. This basically means that support is likely to be given to projects that do not reflect the local feeling and requirements. I believe this needs to be addressed.

More information should be made available to Parish Councils, developers and land owners on the returns they could expect for putting forward land in the “Call for Sites”. To merely state that development would provide competitive returns to a willing land owner/developer is not sufficient and is promoting the “get rich quick” concept to land owners who see this as an alternative to farming their land. Most of the key land sites in the centre of Langham have been put forward which is in conflict to the views of the residents of the village.

11. General comment – Item r) should be in the housing section.

Development of, well located, sustainable rural sites to support employment with design in keeping with the rural area e.g. barn and agricultural building conversions.

There is an issue of controlling the growth of rural employment sites in villages where there is already a significantly high number of business units. At the moment sustainability and transport are the key areas that have prevent sites from being radically expanded further into the countryside. There is a concern that, in the absence of any saturation policies, this position may become more difficult to maintain. Villages like Langham which already has seven employment sites, including two Local Employment Zones, suffers from the reverse commuting model where employees living in the urban areas travel by car to the rural sites. There are very few local residents in Langham that are employed by the local businesses. Also there is no real public transport available in a lot of rural areas and travel by car is the only answer.

12. Encouragement of *home working* in rural areas by encouraging superfast broadband provision and good mobile phone reception in these areas.

The Plan should ensure that travelling to existing large scale urban sites is the obvious choice and more local residents should be employed at the rural sites. Surveys should be undertaken which show the number of local residents employed by rural businesses. If this were addressed correctly and re-balanced travel by car would be much reduced.

13. No

14. Extension of Fibre Broadband is essential for rural business; currently only one exchange, of the three serving Langham, has been upgraded. Mobile 'phone signals fade on the Colchester

boundary of the village! Considering that many of CBC's services, as well as those of ECC and national government, are focused on communicating through the internet, this should be a high priority in any forward planning.

15. Accelerate the rollout of Fibre Broadband to the villages and improve mobile phone signal reception.
16. It is difficult to support the concept of increasing the delivery of rural jobs without undertaking an assessment of what is already there. Some rural locations have an abundance of business areas/LEZs and local employment and just making a comment to increase rural jobs is not appropriate. A proper study of current rural businesses should be undertaken before expansion is considered.

There is a need to preserve the identity of villages and there seems little prospect of priority being given to improve services in villages where the infrastructure has already been demonstrated to be collapsing. There is no likelihood of gas being installed; the roads are already inadequate and priority should rightly be given to upgrading the A 12 and A 120 and links between Colchester and the three rural centres of Wivenhoe, West Mersea and Tiptree; the water and sewage services cannot cope with existing demand; shops, pubs and other facilities continue to close ; and access to secondary and further education, hospitals, dentists and similar services is increasingly limited as these are being concentrated in the town.

17. Yes

18. No

19. Comments related to Key Issues sub- paragraphs:

bb) To the Boxted/Langham area Key Issue bb) would be a welcome initiative.

cc) This has been the role of the Parish Council in rural areas, and this role needs to be safeguarded. We see no mention of this in relation to service provision.

ee) Developing greenfield sites obviously conflicts with this aim; local communities will lose open space.

Further Comments:

The village of Langham is poor in its access to services, with the nearest medical surgeries being in Highwoods, Mile End, West Bergholt and Ardleigh. None of these are accessible by public transport. The same situation applies to pharmacies. Exception to this is a surgery and pharmacy in Dedham, but only with a skeleton bus service with excessive waits.

Langham Community Shop is a thriving retail outlet, based upon professional management and staffed by about 60 volunteers. Other than this facility the only shops reached by public transport are in Dedham and central Colchester; no bus runs to any superstore.

We would look to the Local Plan to help safeguard the Langham Community Centre and Field which promote a range of sports and healthy activities, within the limits of its facilities and budget. Improvements to these facilities and their maintenance is largely funded by PC fundraising.

Most sporting endeavours are only sustained by travelling outside the village by private car, for swimming, the gym, etc.

Education in Langham is served by a Pre-School at the Community Centre, a Primary School nearby, and a Special School, The Oaks (from April 2015). The Primary School is full, and caters for local children and a high proportion of **counter-urbanised** north-Colchester pupils. There is no room on the present site, which is bounded, for expansion. Safeguarding of Primary Education in Langham is a key factor for us.

Cultural facilities in the village are served by the County Library Service, and monthly film shown in the Community Centre, with occasional additional events. Commercial cinema, theatre and art exhibitions are reached only by private car as the timing of such events is usually outside bus running times.

Langham is experiencing a veritable invasion of cyclists and runners. National Cycle Route No.1 follows Langham Lane into the village from Colchester and Grove Hill northwards towards Suffolk. A number of cycling events and countless individuals follow this route. Recreational road runners also use Langham Lane at all times and, here again, are an increasing number of large organised events. There are no footways beyond the traveller's site and the roads are narrow and bounded by uncut hedges which are highly hazardous to walkers, runners, cyclists and also horse-riders. This danger is the present reality, that we would like ameliorated by the Local Plan; that is an off-road cycleway into Colchester, to reduce objective danger and provide a healthy alternative mode of transport.

20. Two further issues:

- i) The use of technology to reduce the need for private car travel e.g. *taxibuses*, driverless taxis, regional park & ride facilities (e.g. Colchester – Chelmsford).
- ii) The expansion of rural transport services where a need has been identified.

21. i) Environmental design to facilitate alternative methods of transport, possibly using the Dutch model.

- ii) Local route surveys which could identify bus users that could be attracted to bus travel if a more reliable/regular service could be provided. At the moment surveys and subsequent analysis only look at existing users.

22. Promoting a safe non-motor corridor to connect Langham/Boxted villages with the Northern Gateway.

23. i) More emphasis should be placed on rural heritage features in the borough and policies should encourage the growth of oral history.

- ii) Policies should include processes for maintaining the rural landscape in areas adjacent to AONBs e.g. high hedging, unobtrusive energy generation and transmission.

24. i) Design of new properties should be in keeping with the character of rural settlements including density considerations.

- ii) Rural local listings

- iii) The collection of historical artefacts and documentation in rural areas.

25. i) Encouragement of tourism to heritage areas should be a high priority, through publicity of the less well known heritage areas e.g. coastal areas such as Mersea Island.

- ii) Policies should account for provision and maintenance of public toilets in and near rural settlements, public open spaces and tourist areas.

26. The landscape and biodiversity, and important function as a wildlife corridor, of the Black Brook in Langham/Boxted/Dedham. has perhaps not been signified by appropriate protection status over the entirety of its length.

27. The Black Brook should be given the appropriate protection status over the entirety of its length.

28. Options 1B, 2B, and 3B all indicate proportional expansion of rural settlements. Option 3B proposes the extension of Colchester's urban area north of the A12. All of these options affect

the landscape quality of the northern villages area and is another reason why we would not support urban sprawl beyond the natural division line of the A12.

Village expansion in Langham village will be close to the Dedham Vale Project Area and AONB, that extends as far south as the Black Brook in the area south of Hill Farm. The whole of the Black Brook valley is a wildlife corridor and an area of considerable landscape value. In the south of the parish the Local Wildlife Sites of Kiln Wood is a sole remnant of relatively ancient woodland; in nearby Boxted is the Langham Road Grassland.

Both Kiln Wood and Langham Road Grassland have been mentioned as being able to be isolated in the event of 3B being chosen. This being so, the development would inevitably impact on Salary Brook at a point where it is only several hundred metres from Ardleigh Reservoir, and this area is inevitably within a protected zone to maintain water quality.

**29. Langham's answer is, we would only support Options 1A or 2A.**

The question being asked here is key, "Which option do you think would form the most appropriate strategy for the growth of the borough and why"? We feel that there is a need for some clarity here. As we are responding to these questions as Langham Parish Council we feel that we are identifying the best solution for the Borough that also serves the best interests of Langham. Also, as we are representing the Village the response should carry more weight than a single responder. This can be supported by the following:

- i) Langham residents provided 250 responses to the parish Plan questionnaire which contained valuable information on Housing and Business expansion in the village.
- ii) We held an "Issues and Options" public meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2015 with around 100 attendees. We provided illustrations, together with a draft PC response for consideration and answered questions. We put forward the PC's stance (based on the Parish Plan response and local knowledge) on the 3 site locations (6 options). Information is also provided on the Langham website. The feedback that was obtained indicated that the draft PC response was fully supported.

To clarify "why" we have adopted this position we offer the following information.

**a) Local Views on Housing**

Information obtained from the Parish Plan questionnaire was from 250 people, more than half of these felt there should be no expansion at all. 118 people felt that there was a requirement for very limited housing expansion in Langham. Of this 118 the conclusion was that retirement homes, smaller family homes and starter homes were the overwhelming main requirements and 90 (76% of those supporting housing development) thought that between 1 and 20 houses were required.

More recently we have undertaken a Housing Needs Survey by RCCE and the results of this indicated a need for 7 affordable houses.

Langham PC firmly believes that any moderate expansion called for on the scale identified can be catered for within the existing planning guidelines, without shifting the development boundary beyond the A12 or looking for sizeable expansion sites in the village.

**b) Local Views on Employment**

Langham already has seven business areas including two sizeable Local Employment Zones (LEZs) at Blackbrook Hill and School Road plus large employment areas at Lodge Lane and the Ardleigh Interchange. Langham PC feels that any expansion of the site at School Road would not result in

positive Site Assessments or Sustainability Appraisals. In the Parish Plan questionnaire response Langham residents mainly supported Blackbrook Hill, Lodge Lane and the Ardleigh Interchange for moderate expansion.

#### c) Sustainability

Sustainability is a key consideration in looking at housing growth or business expansion. Under Sustainability we have considered public transport, increase in use of the private car, sewage and gas infrastructures, health and recreation facilities. Langham would fall woefully short in any sustainability key criteria. We have very limited public transport which provides one bus route into Colchester. Buses are approximately every 2 hours during the day and nothing on Sundays.

The private car is the only realistic option for travel to and from Langham and with the reverse commute model in currently in evidence for local businesses. We have hundreds of vehicle movements during the working day that start from, end up in, or transit Langham. There is also a very high incidence of HGV traffic through the village. Routes to and from Langham are only lanes, without proper foundations, that have consistently demonstrated their inability to cope with increased traffic-by collapsing.

Local infrastructures for sewage and gas are also a big worry. Two years ago the local Sewage Plant failed and sewage was being removed by tanker whilst the problem was worked on. We do not believe that there is capability to expand this operation and are worried by the ability of the local plant to continue the current service without even thinking about expansion.

We have no gas supply to Langham and no interest from the supply companies to provide this service in this rural location.

There are no medical facilities (including a pharmacy) in the area or access to them by public transport. All recreation facilities are currently provided and funded by the village; this operates quite well with existing numbers and current usage.

#### d) Settlement Boundaries

We do not think there is any requirement to extend the settlement boundaries for housing or business use apart from a review to consider where Affordable Housing could be located.

#### e) Urban Sprawl

Urban sprawl has always been a major concern to residents living in the villages to the north of the A12 and if this option is adopted there will no longer be a clear demarcation point and any notion of a green boundary, in order to maintain village identities, will be non-existent. The loss of a clear boundary could also cause future development to the north to spiral out of control. These options, in particular 3B, will be further encroaching upon the Dedham Vale AONB.

30. No

31. Yes a worthy aspiration.

32. High densities should only be employed where service provision is compact and transport provision is high; this would infer an urban location. In rural areas high densities are incongruous and unnecessary. e.g. Great Horkesley, where even emergency access is marginal.

Langham Parish Council  
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