

Local Plan – Issues and Options

Local Plan Vision

This talks of developing the urban fringe of Colchester to the north, east and south with a focus on Colchester Town and Stanway and sustainable urban extensions to the north and south-west of the town.

The Little Horkesley Parish Council believe that expansion to the north is not sustainable without major infrastructure improvements relating to improved access to central Colchester at North Station and improvement to facilities in the village communities to the north of Colchester.

The Borough Council attitude is that Park & Ride and cycle routes will solve all problems – this is not so, primarily because Park & Ride, though possibly useful to those to the north of Colchester and those on the A12, it is unlikely to have a significant effect on traffic at peak times and Colchester is hilly- it is not Cambridge - and not suited to commuting by bicycle.

Additionally the consultative document does not address the chronic problems associated with visiting the hospital complex, unfortunately sited to the north of the town, and ignored by the Park & Ride Scheme.

Housing

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment estimates 1,065 homes/year 21,000 in the period of the plan.

The Plan is to build in the town Centre and then Urban Centres (Wivenhoe/Tiptree/West Mersea) and finally smaller villages. The housing needs of an ageing population, which will increase by 50% over the period 2012-2032, need to be addressed.

Whilst the Parish Council appreciates that these housing targets are generated centrally, it believes that this level of growth is unsustainable without the development of a major conurbation within the Borough with a complete infrastructure to support such a conurbation.

The Parish Council's attitude is that piecemeal development in smaller rural communities, which do not have the infrastructure support for an increase in population – medical, shopping, transport, social etc, cannot achieve targets set out nationally.

Centres and Employment

The thoughts on this seem sound - to seek to attract businesses to Colchester and build a mixed economy with an emphasis on retail/tourism.

Removing restrictions on the development of farm buildings must be balanced against the damage done to rural roads by excessively large haulage vehicles. All the Colchester villages suffer from the damage done to country lanes and verges by 44 ton beet lorries and heavy agricultural vehicles for which the lanes were not designed and over which there appears to be no control.

This is a major problem for rural communities which is not recognised by either Borough or County authorities.

Rural Colchester

30% of the Borough's population are in rural Colchester and 23% of the jobs of the Borough are in rural areas – a 50% increase over 10 years.

Recommendations include improved technology in the countryside, more diversification of farm buildings and a recognition of the problems of rural life – a general lack of facilities.

The Council welcomes this recognition of the importance of the rural economy in providing opportunities for job creation but sees little recognition of the problems associated with rural living and measures to support rural regeneration.

Rural Colchester needs a fast and reliable internet service and a wireless based service such as provided by County Broadband does not an adequate service.

Promoting Healthy Communities

The Council supports these proposals but considers a key element in promoting a healthy lifestyle is access to the countryside and the need in the Local Plan for defined measures to support and protect the countryside.

Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

This is really a report on major roads A12 and A120 and accessibility by bus.

No consideration appears to have been given to isolated rural communities, inadequate road links and poor bus services.

Heritage and Design

The Little Horkesley Parish Council finds it strange that there appears to be no mention of the heritage of the internationally famous John Constable, surely the most important heritage figure associated with Colchester, nor Dedham Vale Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Colchester Local Plan surely must reflect the work of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project, in part funded by CBC, and elements of the Project's Management Plan for the years ahead must be embraced by the Local Plan.

Growth Strategy Options

Option 1A and B

Surely the area to the east of Colchester is where Tendring intend to build 4,500 homes which will impact on Colchester – can further development be introduced in that area.

Option 2A and 2B

Acceptable but only if the A120 is dramatically improved e.g. dualled through to Braintree and improved access and service from Marks Tye for commuters.

The Parish Council would favour this above other options.

Options 3A and 3B

The problems of poor access have already been discussed and this option would imply the loss of countryside vital to many both in rural and urban Colchester.

As much as possible the line of the A12 should remain the dividing line between urban Colchester and its countryside hinterland to the north.

Little Horkesley Parish Council

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