

# **Local Development Framework**

## **Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document**

### **Sustainability Appraisal Report**

**Spatial Policy Team  
Colchester Borough Council  
(January 2012)**

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## **1. Introduction**

The Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will provide a means for co-ordinating and directing the incremental change that will occur over the coming period as the Town Centre adapts. The SPD will help to fulfil the objectives of the Better Town Centre project. The Better Town Centre project is overseen by a cross-departmental group. There are nine components to this project, which are:

- Improving Colchester for you and your family
- Creating quality public spaces and places
- Bringing new buildings and street scenes
- Supporting business and retailers
- Making it easier to get to and around Colchester
- Promoting Colchester
- New things to see, do and visit
- Ensuring clean and safe places and spaces
- Changing Colchester after dark

SA is about asking at various intervals during plan preparation: “how sustainable is my plan?”. A range of objectives are established and all options are assessed against these objectives to compare their environmental, economic and social effects and ultimately to assess how sustainable an option is.

The Council integrates Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) into all SA work. SEA is an assessment of the environmental impacts of a plan and is required by the SEA Directive, which is transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. SA is not required for SPDs, however SEA is required and as these assessments have a similar methodology the Council has decided to carry out a full SA for this SPD. This will allow the social and economic effects of the SPD to be understood, in addition to the environmental effects.

This SA report is structured into the following sections:

**Section 2** provides an overview of the SA process and how it integrates with the Town Centre SPD.

**Section 3** sets the context of the appraisal. It includes the key messages from the review of relevant policies, plans and programmes and sustainability objectives, as well as a collection of baseline information and indicators used that are relevant to this SPD. This section also identifies the key characteristics of the area and the key sustainability issues and problems relevant to this SPD and sets out the SA Framework for the SPD.

**Section 4** outlines how options were considered as part of the SPD.

**Section 5** predicts and evaluates the effects of the plan and considers mitigation and enhancement measures.

**Section 6** sets out the monitoring framework for this SPD.

We welcome your comments on this SA Report for the Town Centre SPD.  
Comments should be sent to:

FAO Spatial Policy Team  
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Alternatively comments can be emailed to [planning.policy@colchester.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@colchester.gov.uk)  
with 'Town Centre Sustainability Appraisal Report' in the subject box.

The closing date of the consultation is 27 July 2012.

## **2. Integrating SA with Colchester's Local Development Framework**

A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides detailed planning guidance which builds on Colchester's general policies as set forth in its adopted Local Development Framework (LDF). SPDs cannot set out new policy, but instead expand upon how LDF policies should be applied. In this case, the Town Centre SPD provides detailed guidance on the delivery of the vision set out in the Core Strategy for the future direction of Colchester's Town Centre. The SPD is intended to ensure a holistic approach to the reinvigoration of spaces, uses and activity in Colchester's historic centre that will ensure its continued vitality in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century context of economic challenges, climate change and new ways of spending leisure time.

The Core Strategy, adopted in 2008, sets the overall direction for all subsequent planning policy documents in the Local Development Framework, including this SPD. It highlights the role of the Town Centre as the cultural and economic heart of the Borough, and provides that it will be enhanced and extended through regeneration, public realm improvements and a balanced mix of uses that sustain activity throughout the day and evening. The adopted Development Policies and Site Allocations documents, adopted in 2010, provide further guidance on appropriate town centre uses. The general support for mixed uses is tailored to ensure that future development builds on the strengths of existing uses and local character.

The SPD and other associated LDF documents do not provide specific detail on the masterplanning of particular sites; rather they provide guiding principles which should then be applied in the process of developing individual proposals for the Town Centre. The SPD provides a means for co-ordinating and directing the incremental change that will occur over the coming period as the Town Centre adapts to changing economic, environmental and social circumstances.

### ***Scoping***

A SA scoping report was published for consultation in November 2011. This set out the scope of the appraisal and the three consultation bodies as set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes 2004 (Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency) were consulted for a five week period.

Natural England and English Heritage responded to the consultation and their comments have been incorporated into the SA.

### ***SEA***

It has become good practice for the requirements of the SEA Directive to be 'signposted' in the SA Report. Table 1, below, sets out the requirements of the SEA Directive, which task or stage of the SA this relates to and where it appears in the report. This clearly demonstrates that the full requirements of

the SEA Directive have been incorporated into the SA Report and also usefully directs readers to their area(s) of interest.

**Table 1. SEA Requirements**

<b>SEA Requirement</b>	<b>SA Task</b>	<b>Notes</b>
“The authorities referred to in Article 6(3) shall be consulted when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the environmental report.” Article 5(4)	Scoping	A SA Scoping Report was prepared and published for consultation between 4 November and 9 December 2011.
“Where an environmental assessment is required under Article 3(1), an environmental report shall be prepared in which the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated.” Article 5(1)	Preparing the SA Report.	This is the SA Report.
“The authorities referred to in paragraph 3 and the public referred to in paragraph 4 shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme or its submission to the legislative procedure.” Article 6(2)	Public participation on the draft SPD and SA Report.	This SA Report will be consulted upon in July 2012
“Member states shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans and programmes in order, inter alia, to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects, and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.” Article 10(1)  (i) a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10; Annex 1	Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the DPD.	Section 6 includes the SA monitoring framework.
“Member states shall ensure that, when a plan or programme is	This is not required as part of	A Sustainability Statement will be

<p>adopted,... a statement summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 have been taken into account in accordance with Article 8 and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with..." Article 9(1b)</p>	<p>the SA process.</p>	<p>prepared prior to adoption of the SPD.</p>
<p>(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes; Annex 1</p>	<p>Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives</p>	<p>Section 2 includes a summary of the SPD and section 3 includes the key messages from other relevant plans and programmes.</p>
<p>(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme; Annex 1</p>	<p>Collecting baseline information</p>	<p>This is covered in section 3.</p>
<p>(c) the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected; Annex 1</p>	<p>Collecting baseline information</p>	<p>This is covered in section 3.</p>
<p>(d) any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC; Annex 1</p>	<p>Identifying sustainability issues and problems</p>	<p>This is covered in section 3. The Habitat Regulations Assessment screening opinion, which is included in the SA scoping report, includes information on the environmental problems relating to sites designated under Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.</p>
<p>(e) the environmental protection</p>	<p>Identifying other</p>	<p>Section 3 includes</p>

<p>objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation; Annex 1</p>	<p>relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives</p>	<p>the key messages from the review of relevant policies, plans and programmes, which includes environmental protection objectives established at international level.</p>
<p>(f) the likely significant effects (1) on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors; Annex 1</p>	<p>Predicting &amp; evaluating the effects of the DPD</p>	<p>The SA Framework ensures that all of the topics listed in the SEA Directive are covered. Section 5 discusses the likely effects of the SPD.</p>
<p>(g) the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme; Annex 1</p>	<p>Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects.</p>	<p>Section 5 includes suggested mitigation and enhancement measures.</p>
<p>(h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information; Annex 1</p>	<p>Developing the DPD options</p>	<p>Section 4 of the SA Report includes a summary of the appraisal of alternatives and section 3 includes difficulties encountered during the assessment.</p>
<p>(j) a non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings. Annex 1</p>	<p>This is not required as part of the SA process.</p>	<p>A non-technical summary has been prepared and is available on the Council's website.</p>

### 3. Context for the Sustainability Appraisal

#### **Key Messages**

The key messages from the review of policies, plans and programmes is set out in table 2, below. The overall message coming out of the review is the need to promote and enhance the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. The detailed summary from the review of policies, plans and programmes is included in appendix A of the Scoping Report.

All relevant national Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) have been reviewed. However, the draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which at the time of writing this Scoping Report is emerging, will, when adopted, replace all PPS' and PPGs.

**Table 2. Key messages from the review of policies, plans and programmes**

New development of main town centre uses to be focused in existing centres, with the aim of offering a wide range of services to the communities in an attractive and safe environment and remedying deficiencies and provision in areas with poor access to facilities.	Planning for Town Centres: Practice guidance on need, impact & the sequential approach, PPS4, PPS6
Competition between retailers and enhanced consumer choice through the provision of innovative and efficient shopping, leisure, tourism and local services in town centres, which allow genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community (particularly socially excluded groups).	
Not all successful town centre regeneration projects have been retail led. A range of measures have been used elsewhere, including active management & promotion; public realm improvements; and access & transport improvements.	
Experience suggests that the most effective town centre strategies are able to harness the value created by main town centre uses, retail in particular, to deliver a wider range of regeneration benefits including improvements to accessibility, public realm and the ongoing management and promotion of the Town Centre.	
Town Centre strategies should include: - clear guidance on the scale & form of new development; - allocation of sufficient sites - identification of key development opportunities; - a clear statement about delivery; - LPAs attitude towards competing developments.	
LPAs should have regard to the key role of retail anchors & integration is an important aspect of retail proposals.	
Promote the vitality and viability of town centres, and meet the needs of consumers for high quality and accessible retail service.	National Planning Policy Framework, PPS4, PPS6
Make Colchester a better place to work, live and visit.	Creative Colchester
Drive the local economy by providing creative jobs and encouraging inward investment.	Creative Colchester
Support visitors to the new St Botolph's cultural quarter.	Creative Colchester
Create opportunities for talented young people.	Creative Colchester
Colchester needs to continually enhance its retail standing if it is to remain competitive.	Retail Study on Colchester's Town Centre 2011
The main threat to the Town Centre is the ongoing challenge	Retail Study on Colchester's

of a depressed retail market generally.	Town Centre 2011
Colchester's Town Centre is historic and development must respect the historic environment and its setting.	The Walls Management Plan, PPS5, Colchester Borough Core Strategy, Historic Environment Characterisation Project
Opportunities should be taken to enhance historic buildings and their settings.	PPS5, Colchester Borough Core Strategy, The Walls Management Plan, Historic Environment Characterisation Project
Many archaeological investigations have taken place across the town, which have repeatedly demonstrated its high importance and potential.	Historic Environment Characterisation Project
The Town Centre SPD should include measures to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.	Limiting Global Climate Change to 2 degrees Celsius: The way ahead for 2020 and beyond, Adapting to climate change; a framework for action, PPS22, UK Renewable Energy Strategy, Colchester Borough Council's comprehensive climate risk assessment
The Town Centre SPD should ensure that it incorporates the objectives of social progress which recognises the progress of everyone, effective protection of the environment, maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment and prudent use of natural resources.	Securing the future – delivering UK sustainable development strategy, Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning, PPS1
Measures such as biodiversity enhancement, green infrastructure, SuDS and the prudent use of natural resources should be incorporated into any new proposals.	Future Water, PPS9, PPG17, PPS25, Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Strategy Study, Essex Biodiversity Action Plan, SFRA, Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy
Make the fullest use of sustainable modes of transport in the town centre.	PPG13
Air quality is an important issue.	PPS23
The Olympic Games offers opportunities for the Borough particularly in terms of tourism.	Regional Business Plan, A Better Life: The role of culture in the sustainable development of the East of England
A priority for Colchester is to become an outstanding visitor destination and celebrate its heritage, culture and leisure activities.	Sustainable Community Strategy
All development should be of high quality design.	Colchester Borough Core Strategy, Shopfront Design Guide SPD
Inter-relations between place making, economic development and quality of life should be explored.	Creative Colchester

**Baseline**

The boundary of the Town Centre is illustrated on the Central Area plan of the LDF Proposals Map and is based on historic and topographic considerations. It excludes Castle Park, but since no new development would be expected to be approved within the Park, it is not considered necessary to include it within the Town Centre boundary.

The Town Centre boundary defines the area within which 'town centre uses' are to be located within Colchester. Town centre uses appropriate to Colchester's Town Centre are defined by Core Strategy Policy CE2a as including retail, offices, leisure and cultural facilities. The Town Centre is the preferred location for these uses. Proposals for these uses outside the Town Centre will be required to demonstrate they could not be accommodated within the Town Centre, in line with national policy in PPS4.

Policy DP6 of the Development Policies DPD identifies different Town Centre areas where different proportions of non-retail use will be acceptable: the inner core, outer core and mixed use area.

### Environmental aspects

Colchester is the oldest recorded town in Britain and subsequently the Town Centre has a rich cultural heritage. There is a concentration of historic buildings in the Town Centre and Castle Park, a Grade II Registered Park and Garden, is located within the Town Centre (although not within the SPD area). Whilst it is clearly important to protect all historic assets it is also important to protect the setting of historic assets.

The Roman Walls erected around the town continue to define the Town Centre, both by their physical presence in many areas and by defining the compact commercial core of the town, which tends to be of a higher density and different character to development outside the walls. The insertion of new roads on Balkerne Hill and Southway in the 1960-70s created strict boundaries between the Town Centre and surrounding residential areas to the west and south sides.

Key landmarks in the Town Centre include the Castle Park, Castle, Jumbo water tower, Town Hall, Roman Balkerne Gate and St Botolph's Priory. Castle Park is located to the north, which ascends the slope from the Colne River to abut the High Street. The historic restored Castle, built by the Normans on the ruins of Claudius's temple, sits at the top of Castle Park. The High Street is distinguished by the park entrance at one end and the Victorian Jumbo water tower visible at the other end, with a range of period commercial buildings and the Edwardian Town Hall with its clock tower in the middle.

Jumbo water tower is on English Heritage's Building at Risk Register. The condition of the building is described as poor and occupancy vacant. The following buildings within the Town Centre SPD area are on the Essex County Council Heritage at Risk Register, which covers Grade II listed buildings:

- Roman Town Wall at the bottom of North Hill
- East Hill House, High Street
- Grey Friars, High Street

- Boundary wall to Grey Friars, East Hill
- 48 North Hill
- 7 Queen Street
- 13 Queen Street
- St Georges Hall, 156a High Street

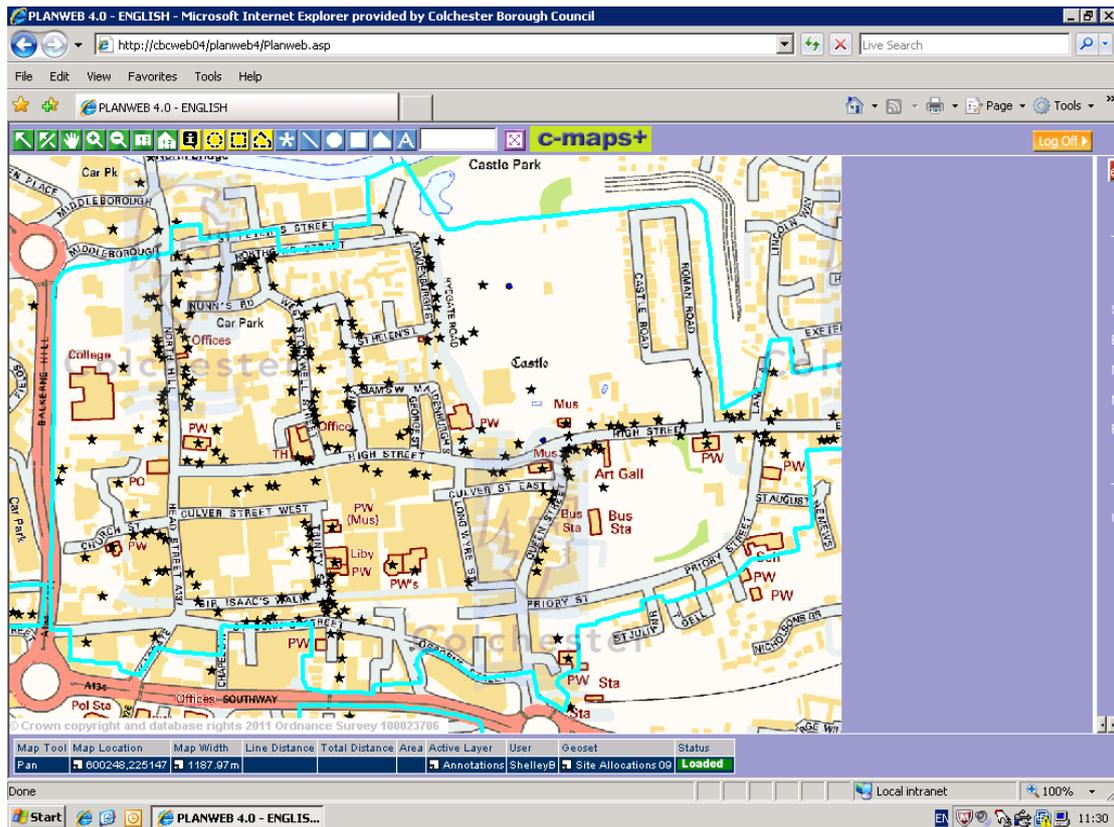
As explained in the Historic Environment Characterisation Study the Roman town walls set the topographical limits for the future medieval and post medieval development in the town and much of the historic street pattern, together with several historic and landmark buildings, survives. The town has a relatively dense pattern of development centred on several main street spines. The thorough-fares are characterised by historic passages and narrow streets. There is rich variation in architectural styles, built-form, materials and details. The High Street follows the line of the main Roman road through the town and was formerly the area of the medieval market. Today, it forms a central commercial and retail spine.<sup>1</sup>

Functionally, the Town Centre is characterised by a shopping core centred around the High Street, Culver Square, Lion Walk and the lanes running along the Town Walls. The St. Botolphs Quarter area to the east is the main focus for regeneration in the Town Centre, with the new Firstsite gallery providing the catalyst for cultural related development. Residential uses predominate in the historic Dutch Quarter tucked in behind the High Street, North Hill and Castle Park, while other residential units are scattered throughout the Town Centre above shops and mixed in with other uses. Office uses are concentrated in the Town Centre fringe, which contains a number of larger modern office buildings; although some of the historic Town Centre buildings have been adapted for office use.

The Town Centre is designated as a Conservation Area. The Town Centre's position on a hill allows views out to the open countryside, which provides a relationship between the Town Centre and surrounding areas. There are numerous listed buildings within the Town Centre, with high concentrations along North Hill, Stockwell Street, Trinity Street, St Johns Street and east of the High Street. Map 2, below, shows the extent of the Town Centre Conservation Area and listed buildings within the Town Centre.

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<sup>1</sup> Historic Environment Characterisation Study, p.55.



**Map 2.** The Town Centre Conservation Area is delineated by the blue line and the black stars show the listed buildings.

The archaeological character of the area is dominated by above and below ground remains associated with its almost continuous function as an urban centre since Roman times. Many archaeological investigations have taken place across the town, which have repeatedly demonstrated its high importance and potential, including deeply stratified deposits, water logging and the Boudican destruction horizon.<sup>2</sup>

Air quality within and around the Town Centre is poor. There have been long standing Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) in Brook Street and Mersea Road and recently AQMAs have been proposed in the following Town Centre locations:

- Central Corridors, comprising High Street, Head Street, North Hill, Queen Street, Osborne Street, Magdalen Street, Military Road.
- East Street and the adjoining lower end of Ipswich Road.

Whilst the SPD area is within an area at low risk of flooding it is bounded to the north by areas at medium and high risk of flooding.

The geology of the Town Centre is Kesgrave Sands and Gravels.

There are no Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation or Ramsar Sites within close proximity to the Town Centre. This SPD will not affect any of these internationally notified sites as concluded in the Habitat

<sup>2</sup> Historic Environment Characterisation Study, p.56.

Regulations Assessment screening opinion, which was included in the SA Scoping Report.

### Social aspects

Mosaic is a modelled analysis of expected household characteristics. 99% of households in Colchester Borough have been given a Mosaic classification, which can be used to gain a better understanding about the characteristics of residents living in different areas of the Borough. There are 69 Mosaic Types in total and not all of these Types are represented in Colchester.

Within Colchester Town Centre there are 26 Mosaic Types. Some of these represent only a few households. The top five Mosaic Types within the Town Centre are:

1. G33 Transient singles, poorly supported by family and neighbours (39% of household types)
2. G32 Students and other transient singles in multi-let houses (11% of household types)
3. M58 Less mobile older people requiring a degree of care (9% of household types)
4. G26 Well educated singles living in purpose built flats (7% of household types)
5. G29 Young professional families settling in better quality older terraces (5% of household types).

It is clear from these top five Types that there is a great variety of people living within the Town Centre. Each of these Mosaic Types is summarised below.

The most common Mosaic Type by far was G33 'Transient singles, poorly supported by family and neighbours'. 39% of households within the SPD area fall within this Type. This Type is characterised by being poorly qualified, transient young people living in poor quality accommodation; typically this Type is located close to the centres of seaside towns or major service centres. Many people are not in employment, education or training (NEETS). This Type tends to have weak links within the community and relatively few residents have been born in the area. Many have poor relationships with their parents and are disrespectful of authority. These neighbourhoods have a high demand for policing. These are communities in which substance abuse and alcoholism are serious social problems. They suffer relatively high levels of opportunistic crime. These neighbourhoods are prone to designation as alcohol free zones. High proportions of residents suffer hospitalisation, notwithstanding the young age profile of the community. There are particularly high admission rates for mental illness, for self harm and for substance abuse. Whilst these neighbourhoods contain fewer than average children, local pupils tend to perform poorly in key stage tests. Large numbers of young people rely on modest benefits. Many residents rent from private landlords. Residents make little use of the leisure services provided by local councils. Few use libraries or parks and these tend not to be people who are interested in the arts.

The second most common Mosaic Type within the Town Centre is G32 'Students and other transient singles in multi-let houses'. This Type is found in

those parts of university towns where students rent flats and divided houses from private landlords. Mixed with these populations are many other young people who enjoy the cultural diversity and proximity to the variety of entertainment facilities provided by the town centre. Since care for where they live is not always the highest priority for student tenants many of these houses are not maintained to a good standard of repair. Rubbish may accumulate in the front garden, summer evenings can be blighted by noise and traditional community networks become disrupted, with the result that the residual members of the non-student community leave for a life in quieter suburbs. Most residents were born and brought up elsewhere and few people have families living locally. For many the university is the focus of community life and provides numerous services that students use; overshadowing other local organisations. These neighbourhoods do attract the professional criminal from other parts of the town partly because many students don't take care to protect their possessions as well as they should. Despite the large number of graduates and undergraduates, pupils at local schools, whose parents are often not connected to the university, do not necessarily perform particularly well in key stage tests. Children often suffer because the community gives priority to the needs of young adults rather than families with children.

The third most common Type is M58 'Less mobile older people requiring a degree of care'. In this Type it is common to find very elderly people living in small private courts specially designed for their needs, as well as in sheltered accommodation provided by the local authority or in nursing homes. Most of this population is 75 years of age or older. Many of them have lost a partner, had a fall or begun to suffer from a degenerative illness which now makes it difficult for them to maintain the private homes and gardens, which many of them, until recently, retained the ownership. The accommodation they are now in may take the form of a self contained flat, in some cases supported by a warden, or a separate room in old people's accommodation reliant on the services of a common kitchen. It is common for these people to benefit from a private occupational income or from private savings for retirement. Many residents were born in a different part of the country from the one in which they now live and, whilst most have children, these often live far away. Nevertheless, people often have a strong degree of interest in the local community and welcome opportunities to continue to play a role in it. Mobility is frequently a constraint on social interaction, and people often need help adapting their homes.

The fourth most common Type is G26 'Well educated singles living in purpose built flats'. This Type contains large numbers of young, single professionals, often in their late 20s or early 30s, many of whom live in modern purpose-built flats in suburban locations. Many of these flats will be held on a leasehold basis. These neighbourhoods are common in parts of the country which suffer from a housing shortage and where average property prices are well above the national average. Many people have chosen to live in a purpose-built flat within easy walking distance of a station. A key feature of these neighbourhoods is their transience. People who move into these blocks are seldom people who have been brought up in the community in which they now live. Most will move out once they settle down with a partner to have children or once they reach a

stage in their career when they can afford a house with a garden. Levels of health are good and many are likely to take regular exercise and to take care over what they eat. Relatively few children live in these neighbourhoods due to the unsuitability of the properties for a family. Most of the children who do live here are young, and as they get older it is likely that parents will re-locate to a more spacious property close to good quality schools. Although the quality of the housing is good, many residents suffer from living in very cramped conditions. Room sizes are small and many people do not have adequate space for storage. Working and commuting long hours, many people spend their weekends relaxing, eating out at restaurants and cafes, going to the cinema or the theatre or visiting their parents or friends in the country. Relatively few make use of local authority leisure services, whether libraries, swimming pools or sports centres.

The fifth most common Type is G29 'Young professional families settling in better quality older terraces'. This Type contains many well educated people, many in their late thirties and early forties, who are bringing up a young family in an area of pleasant, older style housing. People tend to like the idea of living in a neighbourhood which is relatively densely populated and which contains an interesting mix of people from different ethnic backgrounds and lifestages. Residents often originate from different parts of the country; as a result, they tend not to enjoy the support of immediate family. Many of them are keen to develop new networks of friends and enjoy the idea of playing an active role in the local community. Standards of health are significantly higher than the national average. People tend to be working in agreeable office environments. Most children perform well at school, benefitting from their parents' experience of the educational system and interest in their development. The quality of housing is good and most older homes have been restored in such a way as to highlight their original features. The family is the focus for leisure activities with local parks proving attractive for young families. Residents often live very close to commercial and public services and, as a result, are less reliant on cars than many other higher income Types.

The information in this section has been taken from Mosaic 2010 household classifications for the Borough (Mosaic Public Sector 2009 Interactive Guide version 2.00).

The five main household Types within the Town Centre, which make up 71% of the population, are generally fairly transient. All of the Types are characterised by people who do not generally come from the area and have no family nearby. Many are also not likely to stay long term.

All of the top five Mosaic Types within the Town Centre have generally fairly green lifestyles, although this is typically not by choice. Many live in small homes, which produce less CO<sub>2</sub> emissions than the average home and many access employment/ services by foot due to their location in the Town Centre.

The G33 'transient singles poorly supported by family and neighbours' Type, which make up 39% of household types are generally poorly qualified and

made up of NEETS and so the SPD could help with schemes to promote and encourage new jobs and training initiatives within the Town Centre.

Housing quality for the five main Mosaic Types is mixed, with two Types generally experiencing poor quality housing (G32 Students and other transient singles in multi-let houses and G33 Transient singles poorly supported by family and neighbours) and G26 Well educated singles living in purpose built flats experiencing good quality, albeit cramped housing. The SPD cannot really do anything about the condition of existing housing, but improving the quality of the public realm may make existing residents take better care of their homes.

Links to the community is also mixed between the five main household Types with G32 Students and other transient singles in multi-let houses and G33 Transient singles poorly supported by family and neighbours having weak links to the community and M58 Less mobile older people requiring a degree of care and G29 Young professional families settling in better quality older terraces having an interest in the community.

Levels of crime are generally high for two of the household Types (G32 Students and other transient singles in multi-let houses and G33 Transient singles poorly supported by family and neighbours). These two groups are also characterised by children performing poorly at school. However, G29 Young professional families settling in better quality older terraces generally have children performing well at school. The SPD needs to ensure that it balances the needs of the Town Centre population and does not focus too much on one group, ignoring the needs of the remaining population.

Three of the household Types have little use of local authority leisure services (G32 Students and other transient singles in multi-let houses, G33 Transient singles poorly supported by family and neighbours and G26 Well educated singles living in purpose built flats). Parks are important for young professional families settling in better quality older terraces. It will be important that the SPD helps to bring about the improvement of open spaces throughout the Town Centre.

Mobility is a problem for M58 Less mobile older people requiring a degree of care and so the SPD should ensure that wherever possible access around the Town Centre is improved.

### Economic aspects

In 2010 Colchester had a Town Centre ranking of 74 according to the Javelin's Venuescore Listing. As a comparison with nearby centres, Chelmsford has a rank of 90 and Ipswich has a rank of 48. Other rankings put Colchester at a rank of around 50. The highest ranking Colchester Town Centre has had under the Javelin's Venuescore Listing was 58<sup>th</sup> in 2005. Since 2005 Colchester's Town Centre rank has declined, which is likely to be because it has not benefitted from any major retail development in many years unlike other centres.

The total retail floorspace in the Town Centre is 1,167,100 ft<sup>2</sup>. This includes convenience and comparison goods and retail and leisure services. Colchester's Town Centre floorspace is about 200,000 ft<sup>2</sup> lower than the benchmark average and 144,900 ft<sup>2</sup> less than Chelmsford Town Centre. As Colchester's Town Centre is ranked higher than Chelmsford's this suggests that the amount of floorspace does not determine the success of the centre. The annual comparison goods spending in the Town Centre is £498 million.

The vacancy rate was 9.7% in May 2011 and the benchmark is 12.4%. Problematic voids in the Town Centre are the former Co-op department store, former Odeon in Crouch Street and the two units on the High Street adjacent Head Street.

There are 450,000 people within the catchment area of Colchester's Town Centre. 125,000 of these live in the Primary band. The shopper population is 162,000, which is high by most standards. Centres of critical mass within Colchester Town Centre's catchment area include Clacton, Harwich, Hadleigh, Sudbury, Witham, Tiptree and Halstead.

Parts of Colchester's Town Centre are characterised by independent local traders. 41% of floorspace is used by independent and local traders, which compares to the benchmark of 40%. The Retail Study (2011) concluded that the independent sector is an underutilised asset. It recommended that this sector would benefit from proactive management and marketing.

There are 17 retailer requirements within Colchester and many of the big retailers are under-spaced. The Retail Study (2011) identifies a need of 137,241 ft<sup>2</sup> comparison goods floorspace by 2014 and 395,491 ft<sup>2</sup> by 2019. There is an undersupply in childrens clothes, jewellery and ladies clothes.

Retail property values in Colchester have grown at 1% per annum over the past 30 years, compared to 3% in the South East and 3.6% in the UK. In 2009 retail property values declined by 5.2% in Colchester compared to an average UK decline of 0.4%. Rental values have grown at 2.5% per annum over the past 30 years, compared to 3.9% in the UK. Average retail rental values declined in 2007 and are still declining but are forecast to increase from 2013.

Tourism is important for Colchester's Town Centre and indeed the entire Borough. In 2008 4.4 million visitor trips were made to the Borough. This was split between 60,000 international visitors, 220,000 domestic short break visitors and 4.1 million day trippers. Tourism supported over 6,000 jobs in the Borough and contributed £200.3 million to the local economy in 2008.

## SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis, below, summarises the issues facing Colchester Town Centre.

### **SWOT Analysis**

<p><b>Strengths</b>                  A large catchment pool from which to draw                  Robust population and spend growth                  An extremely diverse geo-demographic base                  A solid and rounded retail proposition                  A healthy balance between national multiples and local traders                  A compact retail pitch                  A largely pleasant shopping environment                  Historic character, including distinctive historic landmark buildings</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b>                  A High St in need of re-vitalisation                  Area of neglect/ under-investment in need of regeneration (e.g. Queens St, St Botolphs)                  Under supply in some key retailing segments                  Absence of some major retail and leisure names                  A disjointed/ un-coordinated independent/ local trader proposition                  Some problematic large scale vacant units (e.g. former Odeon, Co-op department store)                  Traffic and parking infrastructure issues                  Apparent negative perception amongst local residents</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b>                  A more integrated and pro-active approach to Town Centre management and marketing                  Exploring the possibility of appointing a Town Centre Manager                  More coordinated branding, management and promotion of the independent quarter                  Investment in and management of the traditional high street                  Development of A3/ leisure uses to support the new cultural quarter                  Using this to regenerate wider Queen St and St Botolphs area                  Review of car parking infrastructure</p>	<p><b>Threats</b>                  Ongoing challenge of a depressed retail market generally                  Complacency and failure to evolve                  Standard retail developments unsympathetic to the historic character of the town                  Historic structures at risk</p>

**Table 3.** Town Centre SWOT Analysis. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are taken from the Retail Study, with strengths and threats related to the historic environment added as recommended by English Heritage.

### ***Sustainability Issues and Problems***

The issues and problems facing the Town Centre are set out both in this section of the Scoping Report and within the SPD itself.

#### Meeting the challenge of climate change

Climate change is an issue affecting the whole world and should be addressed in all plans and policies. The theme of carbon reduction is central to Colchester's Sustainable Community Strategy and the work of Colchester 2020. Innovative solutions will be required to the problems of traffic congestion, poor air quality, energy hungry buildings, and scarce land and raw material resources for new development.

#### Keeping ahead in a fragile global economy

In common with town centres around the country, Colchester's retailers are faced with an array of challenges including the growth of internet shopping, increasing costs, competition from out-of-town centres and restrictions on consumer spending. Whilst Colchester's Town Centre shops have a large

hinterland, geographical position alone will not be enough to secure recovery from recession and ensure renewed vitality. Colchester businesses will need to exploit the potential of new technologies and digital connectivity to retain their competitive positions.

Ensuring an appropriate mix of uses to create activity and to provide employment, services, culture/leisure and housing opportunities

Colchester has a diverse mix of uses and activities in its Town Centre, but will need to retain and strengthen this diversity of employment opportunities, mix of independent and national retailers, and range of services to ensure resilience in times of recession. A mix of uses and activities is also important in creating an animated atmosphere and active street scene which contributes to the quality of life for residents and the attractiveness of the town to visitors.

Maintaining a high standard of design and environmental quality for Britain's oldest recorded town

Colchester's uniqueness is underpinned by its rich historic legacy of buildings, streets and spaces. Safeguarding this legacy will rely on reinvigoration of historic buildings and areas through enhancement and new uses, including finding solutions to any historic assets at risk; repair and interpretation of heritage assets to promote their appreciation; and the creation of new, well-designed buildings that respect their historic context, and enhance the townscape, as part of a positive legacy for the future.

Importance of public realm in creating an active town centre

Whilst the Town Centre contains a number of attractive spaces and streets, links between these are fragmented and there are many areas that warrant upgrading. An enhanced public realm will be critical to strengthening the role of the town centre as a welcoming gathering space and improving the historic environment.

Need to address access to and circulation within the town centre

A successful town centre inevitably creates significant movements of people. The challenge is to manage this process to encourage more people to travel by bus, foot and cycle to minimise congestion while providing sufficient vehicular access and parking to sustain economic activity.

Serving a rapidly growing population

Colchester's Core Strategy has responded to the need to house the ever-increasing population pressures on the South-East by providing for the development of 19,000 new housing units for the period 2001-23. The Town Centre will accordingly need to serve more people as a sustainable hub for services, jobs, shops, and leisure activities.

***Likely evolution without the plan based on existing plans, trends and practices***

As part of SA an evaluation of how current policies, practices and trends might change in the future in the absence of any active intervention through the plan is required.

The Core Strategy sets out a vision for the Town Centre, which is expanded upon in the SPD. In the absence of this SPD the Council would still encourage economic development and regeneration in the Town Centre and enhancement of the historic environment. Town Centre development would still be directed here in the first instance rather than edge or out of town centre sites. However, without this SPD the Council will not have such detailed guidance to direct development in the Town Centre.

This SPD provides the spatial framework for relevant elements of the Better Town Centre project. Without this SPD there will not be a planning framework to deliver relevant projects and policies within the Better Town Centre project.

### ***Difficulties encountered during the development of the SA***

As with all SA work undertaken over the past few years one of the main difficulties encountered has been obtaining relevant baseline information. Data from the 2001 Census is now largely out of date and the data from the 2011 Census will not be available for some time. To rectify this problem data from recent studies, in particular the Retail Study has been used. Data on household characteristics from Mosaic has also been used for this SA. This is the first time one of the Council's SAs has used Mosaic data and Mosaic data will now be used in all SA work as it provides useful information about the key characteristics of an area. Mosaic is also updated annually, which ensures the information is very up to date.

Another difficulty encountered in preparing the SA was the different style of this SPD. Previous DPDs and SPDs have been prepared by the Spatial Policy Team. This SPD however, whilst still led by the Spatial Policy Team, has been influenced by a cross-departmental working group under the Better Town Centre project. This has meant that some of the content of the SPD is not strictly related to planning and so it has taken time to identify those elements of the SPD that need to be specifically appraised.

### ***Developing the SA Framework***

Developing SA objectives is a recognised way in which sustainability effects can be described, analysed and compared. Table 4, below, outlines the sustainability objectives and assessment criteria (sub-objectives) against which the draft SPD and alternatives will be appraised. The table also identifies the indicators that relate to each sustainability objective. These indicators will provide a basis for appraising and scoring how well each proposed development policy option performs against the various objectives and criteria and will be used for monitoring purposes.

The SEA Directive lists the following topics that SEA should consider: biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage and landscape. Soil has been scoped out of this SA; all of the other issues are included in the SA Framework. Soil

has been scoped out as the Town Centre is an urban environment and the SPD will not result in significant effects on soil.

SA Objective	Sub-objective/ Assessment criteria	Indicators for SA objective*
<b>Promote the vitality and viability of Colchester Town Centre &amp; meet the needs of consumers</b>	Will it result in regeneration?	Amount of retail floorspace in Town Centre
	Will it result in new retail and leisure opportunities?	% of retail floorspace in Inner and Outer Core
	Will it result in public realm improvements?	Purple flag status
	Will it have an impact on the night time economy?	
<b>Improve access to Colchester Town Centre</b>	Will it improve access to those with mobility impairments?	Amount of investment into sustainable transport provision
	Will it promote sustainable modes of transport?	Change in extent of AQMA
<b>Make Colchester Town Centre a better place to work, live and visit</b>	Will it result in an increase in jobs?	Change in retail & office floorspace within Town Centre
	Will it result in an increase in dwellings?	Amount of new dwellings in Town Centre
	Will it result in an increase in tourists?	Number of applications for new hotels approved in Town Centre
	Will it promote social cohesion?	Number of jobs tourism supports Number of tourist trips in Colchester
<b>Protect &amp; enhance the natural &amp; historic environment &amp; respond to the effects of climate change</b>	Will it protect & enhance the historic town centre?	Amount secured towards open spaces in Town Centre
	Will it affect the character of the town centre?	Change in extent of AQMA
	Will it result in improvements to the green infrastructure network?	Number of new buildings built to BREEAM 'very good' or above
	Will it protect & enhance biodiversity?	Heritage at risk assets
	Will it affect air quality?	
	Will it mitigate & adapt to climate change?	

**Table 4.** SA Framework for Town Centre SPD.

\* Please note that the indicators relate to the SA objective and not all sub-objectives have an indicator against them

The following scoring system will be used to assess the economic, environmental and social impacts of the genuine options. This system has been used in all SA work to date. One score is allocated to each sub-objective, a general evaluation is provided to explain the reasoning for the scores given and an overall summary is included.

Score	Definition
++	Clear and substantive positive effect in response to criteria
+	Some positive effect in response to criteria
--	Clear and substantive negative effect in response to criteria
-	Some negative effect in response to criteria
O	No effect in response to criteria
?	Effect uncertain
I	Depends upon implementation

#### 4. Developing the options

This document is an SPD, which means that it must be appropriate to its context within the Local Development Framework hierarchy and cannot set new policy. As such there are a limited number of spatial options. Initially, however, it was considered that an Area Action Plan might be appropriate for the Town Centre. As work progressed, this option was discounted given that no significant allocations or policy changes were proposed.

The following options were identified in the early phases of development of a Town Centre plan:

- St Botolph's Quarter;
- Retail options; and
- Street market.

Analysis of these options substantiated the view that the Council was not proposing changes warranting a full Area Action Plan. Accordingly, the spatial options section was deleted from later versions of the SPD and spatial options were subsumed in analysis of the policy options for the four key issues identified: Sustainability; Activity; Heritage and Design; and Movement. A summary and the recommendations of the SA is set out in this section as a record of the process. The full appraisals for the initial work are included in the appendix, and the issues raised in the following analysis are also covered in the policy implication analysis in section 5.

##### St Botolph's Quarter

The options for the St Botolph's Quarter include the implementation of the remaining parts of the Master Plan, which includes development of Vineyard Gate, the Cultural Quarter and possible housing on Britannia car park and the do nothing option.

The implementation of the remaining parts of the St Botolph's Quarter Master Plan will result in the regeneration of this part of Colchester Town Centre and could stimulate regeneration of surrounding areas. Proposals for Vineyard Gate will result in new retail opportunities and possibly leisure opportunities. New retail opportunities will attract more visitors into the Town Centre. It is very likely that this proposal will result in public realm improvements as high quality design will be required in accordance with Colchester's adopted planning policies. The extent of the public realm improvements will depend upon implementation and this expectation should be expressed in the SPD. The impact on the night time economy is uncertain as this will depend on the mix of uses within the new development. In determining the mix of uses either through this SPD or at the planning application stage consideration should be given to the night time economy. The design of the development and linkages to the rest of the Town Centre will also influence the impact the development has on the night time economy. As a site towards the edge of the Town Centre there is a lot of potential for improved access to the Town Centre by sustainable modes. This should be incorporated into the development proposals from the outset. Improved access into the Town Centre by sustainable modes of travel will reduce air pollution.

Vineyard Gate is adjacent the Town Wall, development must be sensitive to its setting. There is the potential for a green roof and for tree planting, which would enhance biodiversity and contribute to climate change adaptation. New housing will be delivered if Britannia car park is released for development.

The impacts under the do nothing option are largely neutral, although there are some negative impacts. Whilst a Master Plan does exist for this area this dates from 2004 and if relevant elements of this Master Plan are not incorporated into this new planning policy document for the Town Centre delivery may be difficult and not viewed as a priority.

It is recommended that option 1 is taken forward. Reference to the expectation for public realm improvements should be referred to in the SPD. The need for development to consider promoting and making provision for sustainable modes of travel should also be referred to as a means of improving access, improving air quality and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Lastly, reference should be made in the SPD to the need for development to enhance the setting of the Town Wall.

### Retail

Option 1 of the retail issue is the status quo. Option 2 is expansion based on current market/spatial considerations. This includes the creation of the St Botolphs quarter with a focus on arts/culture related retail, redevelopment/re-use of key Town Centre retail sites (North Site of High Street, St. Nicholas Square and Priory Walk) and the creation of links between all retail areas from High Street to Vineyard Gate.

Both options will result in an increase in jobs and tourism through arts/cultural retail development at St Botolph's. Under the status quo some positive effects are likely as the Council will continue to promote regeneration and new retail/leisure opportunities, although many of the impacts are neutral. The extent of this will depend upon implementation.

Option 2 will result in many significant positive impacts for the Town Centre. Redevelopment of key Town Centre sites will bring new retail and leisure opportunities into the Town Centre and may even result in regeneration of other areas. Creating links between the High Street and Vineyard Gate and regeneration of a number of sites will improve the public realm. Improvements to the public realm offer the opportunity to also improve the setting of historic buildings and to ensure this occurs this should be made clear in the SPD. The design of development and linkages to the rest of the Town Centre will influence the night time economy and consideration will need to be given to issues such as lighting. The SPD should refer to the need to cater for those with mobility impairments when improving connections such as signage appropriate to those with sight impairments, appropriate materials/gradients for those who find walking difficult, etc. Improving connections between Vineyard Gate and the High St will further increase the positive impacts of tourism by making it easier for tourists to get around the Town Centre. As part of improved connections between retail sites appropriate signage should be delivered. High quality design will be required as

standard design is often unsympathetic to historic character. Redevelopment of key Town Centre retail sites offers the opportunity for sustainable design and low carbon energy options. New buildings should meet a minimum BREEAM level of 'very good' and should consider the potential for a district heating network.

Option 2 should be taken forward with the following mitigation enhancement measures incorporated into the SPD:

- Development of Town Centre sites will need to have regard to the historic environment.
- The SPD should make clear that public realm improvements are expected as part of new development and improvements will need to demonstrate that they have included all opportunities to improve the setting of historic buildings.
- Consideration will need to be given to the night time economy, particularly as part of improving connections between Town Centre sites.
- The SPD should refer to the need to cater for those with mobility impairments when improving connections.
- Appropriate signage should be delivered as part of improved connections to make it easier for tourists to access the Town Centre.
- New buildings should meet a minimum BREEAM level of 'very good' and should consider the potential for a district heating network.

### Street market

The final spatial option relates to the street market. The options for this are the status quo, i.e. retain market in Culver Street West, and the establishment of new zones for the market, possibly along the High Street and possibly at the Baptist Church.

The impact of both options is largely neutral. This is largely due to the lack of detail under option 2. If more information about this strategic option becomes available it should be re-appraised. There is a positive but uncertain impact under option 2 as this option would likely lead to more market stalls in Colchester than at present, which would result in an improved offer and an increase in jobs.

## **5. Predicting and evaluating the effects of the plan and considering mitigation and enhancement measures**

The previous section appraised spatial options for the St Botolph's Quarter, the retail offer and the market. The options recommended in the SA have been taken forward and the previous section provides a summary of the likely effects of the Plan in regards to those issues and includes mitigation and enhancement measures.

Chapter 8 of the SPD includes policies for the Town Centre, which expands upon national and local planning policies. All local planning policies have been subject to SA and the SA of the Development Policies DPD in particular is relevant to this SPD.

This section summarises the impacts of the SPD and recommends mitigation and enhancement measures. It then summarises the appraisal of each of the opportunity sites. The full appraisals are included in the appendix.

The SPD will encourage a mix of new Town Centre uses and continue the regeneration of the St Botolph's quarter. The SPD and wider Better Town Centre Project have a focus on delivery and will likely result in more positive impacts than would be the case under the no plan option. The SPD recognises throughout the need to improve the public realm. This can be achieved as part of new development but also through improving existing areas of open space that are in need of rejuvenation. Improving the public realm, which this SPD promotes, is likely to have a positive impact on social cohesion by providing people with public areas to socialise. The SPD will contribute to the Council's aim to achieve and maintain Purple Flag status but more information should be included in the SPD to ensure that this is achieved. The development of a cultural quarter will result in an increase in tourists. Anecdotal evidence suggests that since the opening of Firstsite the Town Centre has experienced an increase in visitors.

The Town Centre wayfinding scheme will continue to improve access to the Town Centre for those with mobility impairments and by sustainable modes of travel. As part of the wayfinding scheme the Council will develop a Historic Town Walls route, which will promote the historic environment to visitors and shoppers. Interpretation of historic assets will promote their appreciation. New signs should be clear, concise and consistent and informed by the findings of research involving older people's use of the Town Centre. Measures to facilitate more journeys by bus, cycle and foot will continue to be promoted, which will promote sustainable travel.

The SPD will protect the historic environment and makes reference to the wide range of historic assets within the Town Centre. Reference should also be made to the need to protect the setting of historic assets and the desire to enhance buildings at risk, often by bringing these buildings back into appropriate uses. The SPD makes the link between protection and enhancement of the historic environment and tourism. The SPD recognises throughout the importance of

local distinctiveness and the need to ensure that development is unique and responds to Colchester's identity.

The SPD requires development to have regard to air quality and refers to the emerging air quality management plan. Relevant actions identified in the management plan should be incorporated into the SPD.

The SPD encourages renewable energy and district heating networks in the Town Centre, which will mitigate the impacts of climate change. More information should be made available on the potential for district heating to ensure the SPD is supported by a credible evidence base. The SPD refers to the adopted Sustainable Design & Construction SPD. To maximise sustainability the SPD should encourage development to exceed the level required in the SPD. Alternatively good practice from BREEAM case studies should be highlighted.

Green roofs and walls are encouraged in the SPD, which will improve the green infrastructure network, enhance biodiversity and manage surface water. Whilst the proposed Tree Trail will not enhance biodiversity it will enhance people's knowledge and appreciation of the existing biodiversity within the Town Centre. To provide more certainty that this will occur the SPD should require applicants to provide justification if they are not including a green roof or green wall. Key open spaces have been identified in the SPD and the Council will support rejuvenation of these spaces. This is likely to come forward through CIL and grant funding.

No negative effects have been identified as part of the appraisal of the SPD and this is unsurprising considering that the SPD positively builds on existing initiatives and local planning policies, which have already been subject to SA. No mitigation measures are therefore required, however a number of enhancement measures have been identified as part of the SA and are listed below.

- To ensure that the SPD really does have an impact on the night time economy measures under the Purple Flag initiative that are relevant to planning should be specifically referred to in the SPD.
- New signs within the Town Centre should be clear, concise and consistent.
- Relevant actions identified in the air quality management plan should be incorporated into the SPD.
- The Sustainable Design policy should encourage major development to achieve BREEAM 'excellent'.
- The following measures are taken from BREEAM's retail case studies and should be referred to in the SPD to demonstrate to applicants the type of measures that the Council will expect: locally sourced materials, a high level of recycling, use of local labour, natural ventilation, use of high efficiency lighting and intelligent lighting controls, rainwater harvesting, and high levels of insulation.
- Energy efficiency measures should be referred to in the Renewable Energy policy as it is more cost effective and greater energy savings can be made through improved energy efficiency rather than going straight to renewable energy technologies.

- To provide more certainty that green roofs/wall will be delivered the SPD should require applicants to provide justification if they are not including a green roof or green wall.
- The policy on Enhancing the Historic Environment should include reference to the need to protect the setting of historic assets.
- Linked to the above, the desire to enhance buildings at risk, often by bringing these buildings back into appropriate uses, should be referred to.

### ***Opportunity Sites***

Chapter 9 of the SPD contains background and urban design guidelines for various Character Areas within the Town Centre. The vision and requirements for each Character Area are taken from existing strategies and the planning policy chapter of the SPD. A description and brief history of each of the Character Areas is given and in some cases it is stated how the SPD will contribute to the enhancement of the Character Area. These Character Areas have not been specifically appraised as part of the SA. The SPD, including spatial options, has been appraised as part of this SA and it is not necessary to repeat elements of this appraisal in the context of the Character Areas.

Opportunity sites for some of the Character Areas have been identified and whilst these are not new allocations they have been appraised as part of the SA to ensure that the likely effects are considered and where necessary mitigation and enhancement measures can be integrated into the SPD.

#### North Side High Street – Williams and Griffin, Greytown House, former Magistrates Court in Town Hall, BT building

All opportunity sites will result in regeneration providing of course that development does come forward as they will bring forward run down/ vacant sites for redevelopment. Due to the location of this site retail uses will form an important part of the mix of uses. The High Street falls within the Town Centre outer core & the introduction of new retail uses in this part of the High Street could extend the primary retail area. Eating and drinking are proposed as secondary uses and this would attract more people to this area in the evening. Whilst there are a number of bars along this side of the High Street this area of the Town Centre lacks restaurants. Restaurants should be preferred to bars in this location to encourage more family trips during the evening.

Rationalised car parking arrangements are proposed as part of this opportunity site. The availability of car parking significantly impacts the mode of travel that people will chose. Therefore, rationalising car parking is likely to lead to an increase in journeys by public transport, walking or cycling. As sites come forward for redevelopment Travel Plans should be required to ensure that sustainable modes of travel are promoted by the new uses.

New retail and restaurant uses will create new jobs, although parts of this opportunity site are currently in use. As part of redevelopment the Council should help to ensure that existing uses are relocated within the Borough.

This opportunity site includes the re-use of the historic Magistrates Court. The Magistrates Court is located within the listed Town Hall and once the new Magistrates Court opens this part of the building will become redundant. Ensuring that historic buildings remain in use helps to ensure that they do not deteriorate. Unsympathetic buildings such as the BT building can harm the setting of historic buildings and the conservation area. The objective to remove the BT building and replace it with something more appropriate will enhance the historic environment and this is supported in the Conservation Area Appraisal. The BT building is prominent around the Town Centre and even from areas north of the town, such as High Woods Country Park. The removal of this building would enhance the character of the Town Centre. However, despite the benefits it is uncertain if this building will be removed in the short to medium term. Restoring the medieval street pattern will create interest and protect the historic environment. The proposed mix of uses will ensure a high energy density and there is good potential for this opportunity site to deliver district heating.

The following mitigation and enhancement measures are proposed for this opportunity site:

- Restaurants should be preferred to bars in this location to encourage more family trips during the evening.
- An area of open space should be delivered, which should incorporate biodiversity enhancement measures.
- Travel Plans should be required to ensure that sustainable modes of travel are promoted.
- The Council's Economic Development Team should help to ensure that sites that are proposed for redevelopment and currently in employment use are relocated within the Borough.
- Proposals for redevelopment should be expected to show that they have considered opportunities for district heating. If these sites come forward at different times the earlier sites should be designed so that a district heating system could be installed at a later stage when there is enough energy demand for district heating to be viable.

#### St. Nicholas Square – Former Co-op and JJB Sports buildings

The former JJB shop is currently vacant but part of the former Co-op building is in use. Due to the location of this site retail uses will form an important part of the mix of uses. St Nicholas Square is currently very run down and is not well used. Improving this square will improve the public realm and character of this part of the Town Centre. If improvements take place in the short term it could be a catalyst for regeneration of the former JJB and Co-op buildings. Improved linkages with Lion Walk and the St Botolphs Quarter will enhance the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

The following mitigation and enhancement measures are proposed for this opportunity site:

- Improvements to St Nicholas Square should take place in the short term as this could be a catalyst for the regeneration of the former JJB and Co-op buildings.

### Priory Walk

Eating and drinking are proposed as secondary uses and the potential for leisure is also recognised. This would attract more people to this area in the evening and link to the cultural quarter. However, this could mean displacement of existing retail units. The creation of an active frontage on Culver Street East would enhance the public realm and improve access to those with mobility impairments. An improved public realm and more interesting uses could attract tourists from the cultural quarter.

The following mitigation and enhancement measures are proposed for this opportunity site:

- Further consideration should be given to opportunities to improve the public realm in this location.

### St. Botolphs Quarter

The implementation of the remaining parts of the St Botolph's Quarter Master Plan will result in the regeneration of this part of Colchester Town Centre and could stimulate regeneration of surrounding areas. Proposals for Vineyard Gate will result in new retail opportunities and possibly leisure opportunities. New retail opportunities will attract more visitors into the Town Centre. It is very likely that this proposal will result in public realm improvements as high quality design will be required in accordance with Colchester's adopted planning policies. The impact on the night time economy is uncertain as this will depend on the mix of uses within the new development. As a large site towards the edge of the Town Centre there is a lot of potential for improved access to the Town Centre by sustainable modes. This should be incorporated into the development proposals from the outset. Improved access into the Town Centre by sustainable modes of travel will reduce air pollution. Vineyard Gate is adjacent the Town Wall, development must be sensitive to its setting. There is the potential for a green roof and for tree planting, which would enhance biodiversity and contribute to climate change adaptation. New housing will be delivered if Britannia car park is released for development.

The following mitigation and enhancement measures are proposed for this opportunity site:

- The area contains a number of listed buildings, some of which are empty and boarded up. It is essential that these buildings are preserved and maintained in good condition and every effort must be made to secure their future.
- Retail led mixed use development offers the opportunity to introduce CHP district heating and this should be explored as part of the development of Vineyard Gate.
- Reference to the expectation for public realm improvements should be referred to in the SPD.

- The need for the development to consider promoting and making provision for sustainable modes of travel should also referred to as a means of improving access, improving air quality and mitigating the impacts of climate change.
- Reference should be made in the SPD to the need for development to enhance the setting of the Town Wall.

### Former Odeon cinema

It has been difficult to appraise this opportunity site as little information is given in the draft SPD in terms of objectives for redevelopment and urban design principles. Furthermore, it is uncertain whether this building will come forward for redevelopment in the short-medium term as it has been vacant for some time and the local press has printed a number of articles over recent years about the difficulty the owner faces in bringing the site forward. If this building does come forward for redevelopment this would result in new retail or leisure uses. This site is towards the edge of the Town Centre and its regeneration would attract more people to this part of town, of benefit to existing traders in Crouch Street. This building is on the Colchester Borough Local List, which lists buildings of local historic interest. If the building is demolished there will be an adverse impact on the historic environment.

The following mitigation and enhancement measures are proposed for this opportunity site:

- This building should be re-used rather than demolished and the site redeveloped as it is on the list of historic buildings of local importance.

### St John's Walk

Improvement of the public realm is the key objective of this opportunity site. The Conservation Area Appraisal considered that the main issue in this area is the amount of traffic using St John's Street, which can be a problem for the large number of shoppers using the multi-storey car parking. The redesign and rationalisation of parking provision, including improved access to the street from parking and enhanced elevation facing Southway, will address this issue. The Conservation Area Appraisal also found that the safety railings and other highway paraphernalia spoil the approach to Scheregate steps, which is otherwise one of the most picturesque corners of the town. Addressing this issue will result in improvements to the historic environment and character of the Town Centre. Wider pavements and more bus stops will result in an enhanced environment for pedestrians and bus users.

The following mitigation and enhancement measures are proposed for this opportunity site:

- Public realm improvements should consider how access improvements can be made for those with mobility impairments.

## **6. Monitoring**

Monitoring is part of SA; it ensures that future SA work is well informed and importantly allows adverse effects, identified through monitoring, to be rectified. The Annual Monitoring Report includes a SA section; this ensures regular monitoring of the Local Development Framework (LDF) documents. The SA framework has remained largely the same for all Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and each SPD is an extension of the Borough's adopted DPDs. Therefore, rather than specifically monitoring the impacts of each document monitoring will look at the whole LDF.