



Colchester Borough Council

**Independent Examination – Section 2 Colchester
Borough Local Plan 2017-2033**

Hearing Statement – Local Planning Authority

**Main Matter 10 – Other Villages and
Countryside (Policies OV1 and OV2)**

April 2021

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Are the policies for Other Villages and Countryside justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national guidance, and local context, including meeting the requirements of the CLP 1?

National guidance

- 10.1 The planning system contributes towards the achievement of sustainable development. The spatial hierarchy (Policy SG1 and Table SG1, see hearing statement 2) and settlement boundaries provide an established means of contributing to sustainable development by taking account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities (NPPF paragraph 17).
- 10.2 The NPPF states that local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances (NPPF paragraph 55).

Evidence and local context

- 10.3 Hearing statement 2 justifies the spatial strategy, which focuses growth on the urban area of Colchester followed by a Garden Community and Sustainable Settlements. Other Villages form the next tier, followed by countryside. The Introduction to Place Policies hearing statement explains the process the Council followed, with reference to the evidence base, in allocating sites in the CLP Section 2.

Settlement Boundary Review (EBC 2.14)

- 10.4 The Settlement Boundary Review ([EBC 2.14](#)) assessed the settlement boundaries of the borough's settlements. The 2010 policies maps, which accompanied the Council's adopted Local Plan, were the starting point for the review. The Settlement Boundary Review assessed the comparative sustainability of the borough's settlements to identify the most sustainable settlements and inform the hierarchy and approach to the spatial strategy.
- 10.5 The methodology was as follows:
- A desk top exercise using aerial photographs and the most up to date Ordnance Survey map to establish land use.
 - A review of the planning history of sites around the current boundaries to establish any areas that had been developed and sites where planning permissions had been granted since the original boundaries were drawn.
 - Site visits to verify the situation 'on the ground.'

- The village facilities survey was updated as far as practicable to identify which settlements are supported by community services and facilities, drawing on evidence sources including Rural Community Council for Essex.
 - An assessment was undertaken of sites put forward under the Call for Sites (2014 and 2015).
 - Sites that might be suitable for future development were identified.
 - Any additional settlement boundaries that may be required were considered.
- 10.6 The following criteria were included in the assessment of each settlement (and part of settlement where separate settlement boundaries exist) to help assess the sustainability of each settlement and the capacity for growth:
- Access to sustainable transport (railway station; bus stop - including location of services and a crude consideration of quality of service).
 - Environmental constraints.
 - Proximity to community facilities including primary school, public open space, community / village hall, doctors surgery, proximity to secondary school, % of people who travel less than 2km to work (RCCE Profile), total population and total households.
- 10.7 For each settlement, the Settlement Boundary Review considered settlement shape and form, high level constraints, high level opportunities, Parish Council/neighbourhood plan group view, a discussion on appropriate growth, potential areas of search/settlement expansion, summary of SHLAA sites, SHLAA sites to recommend as potential allocations, SHLAA sites to discount and a summary for each settlement.

Other Villages

- 10.8 The Settlement Boundary Review, through thorough examination of the borough's settlements, identified which settlements were 'sustainable' and able to accommodate an appropriate level of growth over the plan period. Settlements which were found not to be sustainable are defined as Other Villages, where growth should be limited to infill and rural exception sites. The following settlements are defined as Other Villages in the spatial hierarchy:
- Aldham
 - Easthorpe
 - East Mersea
 - Fingringhoe
 - Great Wigborough
 - Layer Breton
 - Little Horkesley

- Messing
- Mount Bures
- Peldon
- Salcott
- Wormingford

10.9 The Council considers that these settlements are not sustainable settlements due to the lack of suitable opportunities for growth around the periphery and/or lack of services and facilities compared to larger, more sustainable settlements elsewhere in the borough. Some of the Other Villages also have environmental constraints.

Countryside

10.10 The following small settlements are classed as countryside, where countryside policies will apply and there will be a general presumption against new development, unless it accords with the special circumstances set out in the CLP Section 2 or the NPPF:

- Boxted - Mill Road & Workhouse Hill,
- Chappel - Rose Green, Swan Street & Wakes Street,
- Dedham - Bargate Lane & Lamb Corner, Ford Street,
- Great Horkesley – The Crescent,
- Great Wigborough – South Maldon Road,
- Hardy's Green,
- Langenhoe,
- Layer de la Haye – Maltings Green,
- Layer Marney,
- Little Tey,
- Seven Star Green,
- Tiptree Heath, and
- Wakes Colne - Inworth Lane & Middle Green.

In previous Local Plans, these small areas were included within settlement boundaries. Whilst they provide a community function for the small groups of residents living within these areas, as their location is physically detached and sometimes remote from the core villages to which they relate, these clusters of housing/ hamlets will no longer be defined by a settlement boundary. The justification is included in the relevant settlement, or 'core village' summary of the Settlement Boundary Review.

CLP Section 1

10.11 The Vision for North Essex includes conserving and enhancing the undeveloped countryside and the Vision recognises that key to delivering sustainable

development is that new development will address the requirement to protect and enhance the historic environment and settlement character.

10.12 The CLP Section 1 includes the following spatial strategy for North Essex:

“Policy SP 3 - Spatial Strategy for North Essex

Existing settlements will be the principal focus for additional growth across the North Essex Authorities area within the Local Plan period. Development will be accommodated within or adjoining settlements according to their scale, sustainability and existing role both within each individual district and, where relevant, across the wider strategic area.

Future growth will be planned to ensure existing settlements maintain their distinctive character and role, to avoid coalescence between them and to conserve their setting. Re-use of previously developed land within settlements is an important objective, although this will be assessed within the broader context of sustainable development principles, particularly to ensure that development locations are accessible by a choice of means of travel.

In Section 2 of its Local Plan each local planning authority will identify a hierarchy of settlements where new development will be accommodated according to the role of the settlement, sustainability, its physical capacity and local needs.

Beyond the main settlements the authorities will support diversification of the rural economy and conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

As part of the sustainable strategy for growth, the Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Community will be developed and delivered at the broad location shown on Key Diagram 10.2 and on the Colchester and Tendring Local Plans Policies Maps. This new community will provide a strategic location for homes and employment within the Plan period in North Essex. The expectation is that substantial additional housing and employment development will be delivered in the Garden Community beyond the current Local Plan period.”

10.13 The CLP Section 2 complies with this adopted policy. Development will be accommodated within or adjoining settlements according to their scale, sustainability and existing role within the borough and across North Essex. The Settlement Boundary Review assessed each settlement’s distinctive character and role, and through consideration of broad areas and SHLAA sites, identified potential issues to avoid coalescence.

10.14 In accordance with adopted policy SP 3, the Council has identified a hierarchy of settlements where new development will be accommodated according to the role of the settlement, its sustainability, physical capacity and local needs.

Policy OV1: Development in Other Villages

- 10.15 Policy OV1 will be applied when assessing proposals for development in the borough's Other Villages. It is justified by evidence in the Settlement Boundary Review, which provides a thorough assessment of each of the borough's settlements and is consistent with the Council's spatial hierarchy. It is important that the borough's settlement boundaries and any new allocations for growth relate to sustainable locations.
- 10.16 Whilst the CLP Section 2 does not make allocations within the Other Villages, the Council recognises that small scale growth to meet local needs and support communities may be appropriate. The policy is positively worded and provides certainty on the type of development that will be appropriate within Other Villages.
- 10.17 In respect of the requirements under the Habitats Regulations, a series of modifications are recommended and set out in a Statement of Common Ground (SCG1) with Natural England. These include a modification to Policy OV1 which moves text from paragraph 14.246 to Policy OV1. This is set out in the Draft Schedule of Recommended Modifications ([CBC1.6](#)).

Policy OV2: Countryside

- 10.18 The Council believes that development in the countryside should be strictly controlled to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. In accordance with CLP Section 1 Policy SP 3, Policy OV2 supports diversification of the rural economy and conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. Policy OV2 will be applied when assessing proposals for development within the countryside. The policy is clear on the type of development that may require a countryside location. There are other, more detailed Development Management policies in the CLP Section 2, which provide criteria to assess proposals for uses in the countryside. These include policies DM5: Tourism, Leisure, Culture and Heritage, DM6: Economic Development in Rural Areas and the Countryside, DM7: Agricultural Development and Diversification, DM14: Rural Workers' Housing.
- 10.19 Modified Policy ENV1 states that the LPA will conserve and enhance Colchester's natural and historic environment, countryside and coastline and includes wording which will be used to assess proposals for development in the countryside. This modified wording is compatible with Policy OV2, and to better align with the modifications to ENV1 and the national context for rural development, modifications to Policy OV2 are recommended to add reference to the **need to demonstrate that the scheme respects the character and appearance of landscapes and the built environment and preserves or enhances the historic environment and biodiversity**, as set out in the Draft Schedule of Recommended Modifications ([CBC 1.6](#)).

10.20 Policies OV1 and OV2 are justified by appropriate evidence contained in the Settlement Boundary Review. They have regard to the NPPF, by recognising the different roles and character of different areas; the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; they seek to support thriving rural communities and avoid isolated homes in the countryside. The policies also take account of local context, including conforming with the spatial strategy for North Essex in the adopted CLP Section 1.