

4 September 2020

Dear Inspectors,

Thank you for your Local Plan Part 2 Examination Note of 19th August 2020 providing your guidance on progressing Part 2 of the Colchester plan as soon as reasonably practicable. In common with our adjacent local authorities Braintree and Tendring we are looking forward to working with you proactively.

Our planning policy team is currently fully staffed and we are confident we have the ability to respond promptly and thoroughly to information and administrative requests arising from the examination process.

We are prepared for a flexible approach to options to ensure all parties can adequately participate in the EIP, from 100% virtual, to fully in public at a physical venue accommodating social distancing if required, or, a hybrid of both. We will however need as much notice as possible to secure an appropriate venue.

We are in the process of constructing a dedicated set of webpages for the Section 2 examination and are liaising with colleagues in Braintree and Tendring to achieve a consistent approach.

As requested, we have attached a list of evidence base documents as well as a summary of representations received to Section 2, including a brief CBC response.

Since the Local Plan was submitted in October 2017 a number of proposed allocations in the plan have come forward and gained permission, thereby reducing the number of questions to be raised on plan allocations. Equally, however, the passage of time raises the issue of the ongoing appropriateness of the evidence base for the plan. While we consider further updates are required to address developments in the retail sector and to strengthen our heritage assessment work, we are satisfied that the evidence base work for other topic areas remains fit for purpose. We are currently establishing the need for additional topic papers to support and explain this view. We are also considering any amendments to policies considered necessary to update the plan and ensure its soundness. As requested, if we consider that it is necessary to do so, we will provide a brief synopsis of the issues we intend to cover, together with proposed timescales, via the programme officer. We hope to have finalised this review by 2nd October.

We are preparing the two Topic Papers you have specifically requested, although we share some of the questions raised by the other local authorities:

- Topic Paper 1 - Consequential Changes. We have now agreed proposed main modifications for the Section 1 Local Plan and a six week consultation period began on Thursday 27th August. We can therefore begin the work on both parts of this topic paper now. However this may be subject to any further modifications or changes to main modifications following the close of the consultation. We therefore propose an interim version of the topic paper to be sent to you by the 12th October, with a view to a final paper once the section 1 Inspector has provided us his final modifications.
- Topic Paper 2 - Housing. We are preparing a paper to respond to your specific questions which will draw upon our latest Housing Supply Statement and recent appeal decisions confirming that CBC has a five-year housing land supply. The paper will also address the implications of the removal of the Colchester Braintree Garden Community from the plan, to demonstrate that the remaining housing allocations are sufficient to cover the loss of 675

units to be delivered there during the plan period. As you will be aware the Section 1 Inspector has asked the authorities to consider whether the latest ONS household projections (2018-based) represent a meaningful change in the housing situation. While this is primarily an issue for Braintree rather than for Colchester, completion of consultation on this issue may affect finalisation of this topic paper. We would therefore request that the deadline for this paper be extended to 12th October to allow for any consequential changes to be addressed in our paper.

Additionally, our Braintree and Tendring colleagues have raised the following questions for which we would also appreciate a reply:

- Are you able to confirm that you are proposing separate hearing sessions for each of the three local authorities?
- Are you able to say how much notice the Council will be able to be given as to the dates for and format of the examination sessions (we expect for example to use a different venue to accommodate a socially distant physical hearing compared to the broadcast of a virtual hearing)
- Are you able to confirm that you have received the hard copies of the evidence base that were submitted to PINs in October 2017? If not please confirm the documents you would wish to receive in hard copy.
- Can we assume that the Section 2 examination will not need to revisit the issues around legal compliance with consultation process and duty to cooperate etc as the Section 1 Inspector has already considered and concluded on such matters?

We look forward to receiving your response on the additional questions set out in this letter and will provide further updates on the timetable of the work on an ongoing basis.

Kind Regards,

Laura Chase

Planning Policy Manager