

Colchester Borough Council

Draft Publication Local Plan (Regulation 19) – Section Two

Sustainability Appraisal Environmental Report

Spatial Policy Team

June 2017

5 The Appraisal of the Sustainable Growth Policies

5.1 Policy SG1 – Colchester’s Spatial Strategy

This section looks at the Spatial Strategy for the Borough. It directs development towards the most sustainable locations, and provides for supporting facilities and infrastructure to create sustainable local communities.

The Spatial Strategy provides the framework for the place-based approach of the Local Plan and relates allocations to the unique characteristics of particular communities within the Borough.

Following on from the Spatial Strategy for North Essex set forth in Section One of the plan, the Strategic Growth policies in Section Two of this Plan provide the complete strategic picture of the role and functions of different areas of Colchester within its sub-regional context.

POLICY SG1 – COLCHESTER’S SPATIAL STRATEGY

Throughout the Borough, growth will be located at the most accessible and sustainable locations in accordance with the spatial strategy for North Essex set forth in Policy SP6 in Part One and with the spatial hierarchy set out in Table SG1. The spatial hierarchy ranks areas of the Borough in order of their sustainability merits and the size, function and services provided in each area. The centres hierarchy is set out in Policy SG3.

Development will be focused on highly accessible locations to reduce the need to travel. Development will be supported where a real travel choice is provided and sustainable travel for different purposes is promoted throughout the day.

This spatial hierarchy focuses growth on the urban area of Colchester, reflecting its position as the main location for jobs, housing, services, and transport. Within this urban area, the Central Area of Colchester including the Town Centre is the most sustainable location for new development given that it can accommodate higher densities reliant on its good access to public transport and concentrated mix of uses which minimise the need to travel. The surrounding built up, North, South, East and West (including Stanway) urban areas of Colchester provide the next tier of well-connected, sustainable locations for growth. The next tier of preferred growth includes Garden Communities straddling boundaries with adjacent authorities and providing new greenfield sites in sustainable communities which will grow gradually, over time, extending beyond the plan period. The second tier also includes existing Sustainable Settlements within the Borough which are planned for proportionate growth.

In the remaining Other Villages and Countryside of Colchester, new development will only be acceptable where it accords with policies OV1 and OV2. New development in the open countryside will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances to preserve the rural character of the Borough.

5.1.2 Alternatives Considered

Alternatives to Spatial Strategy options and alternatives across the wider strategic ‘North Essex’ area have been explored in the relevant sections of the Section One SA.

Commensurate to the scope of this 'Section Two', a series of options have been considered as reasonable alternatives through the plan making process, and have been subject to assessment in this report. These correspond to those explored within the Issues and Options consultation. At the Issues and Options stage, the following options or alternatives for the distribution of growth were explored:

Alternative (SG1)1 – Issues and Options, Option 1A: Development to the East and West (a separate sustainable settlement to the west of Colchester town, a separate sustainable settlement to the east of Colchester town, urban development on sites in and around the existing urban area, and proportional expansion of the Rural District Centres - Wivenhoe, Tiptree and West Mersea)

Alternative (SG1)2 – Issues and Options, Option 2A: Development to the West (a separate sustainable settlement to the west of Colchester town, urban development on sites in and around the existing urban area, proportional expansion of the Rural District Centres – Wivenhoe, Tiptree and West Mersea)

Alternative (SG1)3 – Issues and Options, Option 2B: Development to the West (as per 2A above, but with an additional proportional element of rural growth across the Borough's villages)

Alternative (SG1)4 – Issues and Options, Option 3A: Development to the East and North (a separate sustainable settlement to the east of Colchester town, a significant urban extension to the north of Colchester town, crossing the A12, in addition to an extension to the north, other urban development in and around the existing urban area, and proportional expansion of Rural District Centres – Wivenhoe, Tiptree and West Mersea)

Alternative (SG1)5 – Issues and Options, Option 3B: Development to the East and North (as per 3A above, but with an additional proportional element of rural growth across the Borough's villages)

At that stage, only broad locations were defined and formed the basis for the assessment of these sites in the sustainability appraisal. The sustainability appraisal of these options indicated that all options were broadly similar, but that those options that explored a number of new settlements with a proportionate level of dispersal around Colchester and the Rural District Centres would have a larger amount of positive social impacts. The Preferred Policy approach most closely resembles 'Issues and Options, Option 1B', however has been built upon and influenced by extensive evidence base work undertaken by the Council in order to determine the sustainability of each settlement within the Borough. This work, forming part of the Local Plan evidence base, is closely aligned to the SA Site Assessment Framework / methodology within this report and explores whether any growth would be suitable in each of the Borough's settlement.

The distribution of those sites that have emerged from the call-for-sites and the assessment of the suitability of these sites as evidenced in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) allow a more informed sustainability appraisal at this Draft Publication stage. It should be noted that further options put forward have been assessed in the context of Section One of the Local Plan, and assessed against alternatives across the strategic 'North Essex' area as appropriate and commensurate to their scope.

The Issues and Options SA assessed the broad options above. The Issues and Options Local Plan consultation and also the call-for-sites process invited any new Spatial Strategy proposals or options to come forward in addition to those listed above. A new proposal was identified through a representation and can be summarised as:

Alternative (SG1)6 - Development focussed within the Regional Centre of Colchester only

5.1.3 Significant, Secondary and Temporal Effects

The following table explores the sustainability impacts of the preferred approach of Policy SG1 and the identified alternatives. The table re-explores those options proposed at the Issues and Options stage to see if they are appropriate, or can continue to be ruled out in light of updated evidence and in consideration of the distribution of suitable, achievable and deliverable sites as submitted through the call-for-sites process or otherwise identified. In the following table, 'DP' refers to the appraisal of the strategy and alternatives at the 'Draft Publication' stage to which this SA relates.

Table 6: Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy Alternatives

Sustainability Objective / assessment criteria		I&O	Policy SG1	Alt (SG1)1	Alt (SG1)2	Alt (SG1)3	Alt (SG1)4	Alt (SG1)5	Alt (SG1)6
		DP							
1	Will it deliver the number of houses needed to support the existing and growing population?	I&O	N/A	++	+	+	++	++	N/A
		DP	++	++	+	+	++	++	-
	It can be expected that the policy and the majority of alternatives would contribute to the delivery of the OAN figure, with the exception of Alternative (SG1)6; this is due to a lack of available and suitable land in around the town of Colchester. Alternatives (SG1)2 and (SG1)3 have been assessed as having less significantly positive impacts associated with the fact that only one Garden Community would be delivered in each instance and there could be resultant delivery pressures within the plan period.								
	Will it provide more affordable homes across the Borough?	I&O	N/A	+	+	?	+	?	N/A
		DP	++	++	+	?	++	?	?
	With the exceptions of Alternatives (SG1)5 and (SG1)6, all options would have varying degrees of positive impacts on affordable housing delivery for the same principle reasons as espoused in the above commentary regarding the assessment criterion regarding general housing delivery. The uncertainties surrounding the impacts of Alternatives (SG1)3, 5 and (SG1)6 largely respond to the additional emphasis on a larger number of smaller developments, which are less likely to respond to affordable housing thresholds and viability implications.								
	Will it deliver a range of housing types to meet the diverse needs of the Borough?	I&O	N/A	++	++	++	++	++	N/A
		DP	++	++	++	++	++	++	?
	The Policy and the majority of the alternatives will have significant positive impacts on delivering a range of housing in so far as they all have the ability to adhere to this assessment criterion. Alternative (SG1)6 is an exception to this however where the option is unlikely to positively respond to larger or lower density housing requirements based on an assumption that significantly higher densities would be required to meet the OAN figure within and around the town of Colchester.								
	Will it deliver well designed and sustainable housing?	I&O	N/A	+	+	+	+	+	N/A
		DP	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
	The Policy and the majority of the alternatives will have significant positive impacts on well-designed housing in so far as they all have the ability to adhere to this assessment criterion. Alternative (SG1)6 is an exception to this however where the option is unlikely to positively respond to some specific design requirements based on an assumption that significantly higher densities would be required to meet the OAN figure within and around the town								

Sustainability Objective / assessment criteria		I&O	Policy SG1	Alt (SG1)1	Alt (SG1)2	Alt (SG1)3	Alt (SG1)4	Alt (SG1)5	Alt (SG1)6
		DP							
	of Colchester.								
2	Will it promote regeneration?	I&O	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
		DP	+	+	+	+	+	+	++
Alternative (SG1)6 will have a significantly positive impact on the regeneration of identified areas of Colchester town associated with the primary focus of development in the broad area. In contrast there will be positive impacts resulting from the Policy and Alternatives (SG1)1-5 in response to a similar amount of development taking place within the town across all these options.									
	Will it reduce the need for development on greenfield land?	I&O	N/A	--	--	--	--	--	N/A
		DP	--	--	--	--	--	--	-
There will be significantly negative impacts on Greenfield land resulting from the Policy and Alternatives (SG1)1-5 as all these options will require the development of Greenfield land to meet the residual OAN requirements once all suitable brownfield sites have been delivered within development boundaries. Alternative (SG1)6 will have a minor negative impact associated with the strong possibility that town centre open space designations, other Greenfield sites within the town and a large number of urban extensions would be required to be allocated for development under this scenario.									
	Will it provide good accessibility by a range of modes of transport?	I&O	N/A	+	+	?	+	?	N/A
		DP	+	+	+	-	?	-	+
In line with the evidence collected for the submitted broad locations for Garden Community options and their policy requirements within Part of the 1 Local Plan, it is feasible that the majority of options will have good accessibility to the town of Colchester. Alternative (SG1)6 would have positive impacts associated with focusing growth in the town centre without exception. There will be uncertain impacts on this assessment criterion resulting from Alternatives (SG1)5 and (SG1)4 in line with a lack of existing rail infrastructure in the broad area. Alternatives (SG1)3 and 5 will additionally have negative impacts due to the larger focus of growth being met across the Borough's villages rather than more sustainable settlements as stated in the settlement hierarchy.									
	Will densities make efficient use of land?	I&O	N/A	+	+	+	+	+	N/A
		DP	+	+	+	?	+	?	?
Whereas density requirements will differ across all options, those that seek a more dispersed pattern of growth across the Borough will have more positive impacts associated with adherence to the density requirements of Garden City principles and the NPPF, most notably the scenario of the preferred Policy approach. Although this could see a larger percentage of greenfield land being allocated, the Policy and Alternatives (SG1)1, 2 and 4 will ensure development densities that respond to local context and character. Alternatives (SG1)3, 5 and 6 would likely require higher densities that are not in keeping with their surroundings in all instances, related to the Borough's villages in the case of (SG1)3 and 5 and within the town of Colchester and its surrounds in the case of (SG1)6.									
	Will a mix of uses be provided?	I&O	N/A	++	++	++	++	++	N/A
		DP	++	++	++	++	++	++	++
The Policy ensures a mix of uses will be viable in line with the overall growth targets of the Local Plan as they respond to OAN. For comparison purposes the same must also be said of all the alternatives explored.									
3	Will it improve the delivery of a range of employment opportunities to support the	I&O	N/A	++	++	++	++	++	N/A
			++	++	++	++	++	++	++

Sustainability Objective / assessment criteria	I&O	Policy SG1	Alt (SG1)1	Alt (SG1)2	Alt (SG1)3	Alt (SG1)4	Alt (SG1)5	Alt (SG1)6
	DP							
growing population?	DP							
The Policy ensures that employment development will be viable in line with the overall growth targets of the Local Plan as they respond to OAN. For comparison purposes the same must also be said of all the alternatives explored.								
Will it maintain an appropriate balance between different types of retail uses and other activities in the Borough's centres?	I&O	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
	DP	0	0	0	0	0	0	-
The Policy will ensure that an appropriate balance between different types of retail uses and other activities in the Borough's centres will be maintained through its approach to residual growth needs on greenfield land in sustainable locations with good access to the town centre being feasible. This can also be said of all Alternatives that explore such an approach. There will however be a negative impact on this assessment criterion resulting from Alternative (SG1)6 where it can reasonably be assumed that available land in the town centre would be required to be allocated for housing and employment development, rather than being safeguarded and allocated for retail and other traditional town centre uses.								
Will it support business innovation, diversification, entrepreneurship and changing economies?	I&O	N/A	++	+	+	++	++	N/A
	DP	++	++	+	+	++	++	+
Whereas it can be assumed that the Policy and all alternatives will have positive impacts on supporting business innovation and diversification in line with the Borough's growth requirements, the preferred Policy and those that ensure a focus of growth to the east will have more significant positive impacts. This is associated with growth at an indicative Garden Community scale to the east being likely to deliver employment uses linked to the University of Essex. The university is currently the Borough's second largest employer, employing approximately 2,000 people. An expansion to the knowledge gateway and increase in skilled jobs will have significant positive impacts on Colchester's economy.								
Will it support tourism, heritage and the arts?	I&O	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
	DP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
There will be no direct impacts on tourism, heritage and the arts from the Policy approach or any of the Spatial Strategy options.								
Will it help sustain the rural economy?	I&O	N/A	0	0	+	0	+	N/A
	DP	+	0	0	+	0	+	--
The Policy will have positive impacts on the rural economy associated with growth being directed to two new rural locations in regards to the Garden Communities and also through a general distribution strategy in the first instance. Those other Alternatives that seek the allocation of more than one Garden Community would also have positive impacts. There would however be significantly negative impacts on this helping sustain the rural economy through Alternative (SG1)6's primary focus on delivering the Plan's growth entirely within the town of Colchester.								
4 Will it reduce the need to travel?	I&O	N/A	+	+	-	?	-	N/A
	DP	++	+	+	+	+	+	+
All options, with the exception of (SG1)6, include new Garden Communities, which will include a mix of uses, including employment, leisure and community uses. This will reduce the need for new residents to travel, providing								

Sustainability Objective / assessment criteria		I&O	Policy SG1	Alt (SG1)1	Alt (SG1)2	Alt (SG1)3	Alt (SG1)4	Alt (SG1)5	Alt (SG1)6
		DP							
that these uses are located at accessible locations within the site, and can support the needs of residents in wider rural areas. Additional positive impacts are associated with a substantial level of growth being allocated to Colchester and other sustainable settlements in line with the preferred Policy approach. Alternative (SG1)6 would have positive impacts associated with focusing growth in the town centre without exception, however impacts are limited where such a strategy would not focus on meeting the needs of the Borough's population outside the main town of Colchester.									
Will the levels of sustainable travel increase?	I&O	N/A	?	?	?	?	?	?	N/A
	DP	++	++	++	+	?	?	++	
The Policy and Alternatives (SG1)1 and 2 will have significant positive impacts associated with focusing growth in the West and / or East alongside a general dispersal strategy in line with the settlement hierarchy; these being the broad locations that have existing rail links and associated infrastructure for the exploration of expansion or capacity improvements as well as existing other sustainable transport links. For this reason, Alternatives (SG1)4 and 5 in exploring the north as a Garden Community option will have uncertain impacts as to ensuring sustainable transport uptake is maximised. Alternative (SG1)3 will have minor positive impacts only as a result of the options additional proportional element of rural growth across the Borough's villages rather than rural district centres. Alternative (SG1)6 will have significant positive impacts associated with the focus of growth to the Borough's most sustainable location, however it should be acknowledged that there would be no wider benefits to rural communities in terms of infrastructure provision as a result of strategic scale growth.									
Will it improve sustainable transport infrastructure and linkages?	I&O	N/A	?	?	?	?	?	?	N/A
	DP	++	++	+	+	+	?	--	
It can be expected that the Policy and all those alternatives that explore Garden Communities will ensure that improvements are made to sustainable transport infrastructure and linkages in line with Garden City principles. Despite this, the Policy and those options that explore Garden Community Options to both the East and West will have significant impacts associated with existing rail links and infrastructure in place for expansion or improvement purposes. This will have wider benefits beyond those for the new communities including for rural areas to the east and west of the Borough. Alternatives that explore a Garden Community to the north will not have rail benefits, but will have good accessibility and public transport linkages to the Northern Gateway and the town centre including the existing Park and Ride. Alternative (SG1)5 will have uncertain impacts however associated with an additional proportional element of rural growth across the Borough's villages. A larger amount of smaller developments that can be expected to come forward as a result of Alternative (SG1)6 will not lead to improvements to sustainable transport infrastructure and linkages to the same level as options exploring strategic level growth; as such significantly negative impacts have been highlighted in response to the likely public transport capacity issues such growth in the town could create with no single scheme likely to stimulate sufficient improvements in an integrated manner.									
5 Will it provide equitable access to education, recreation and community facilities?	I&O	N/A	++	+	+	++	++	N/A	
	DP	++	++	+	+	++	++	+	
The Policy will ensure equitable access to education, recreation and community facilities in line with a general dispersal strategy supplemented by the additional facilities that will be provided by two new Garden Communities to the east and west; this will ensure the best possible dispersal distribution of additional facilities for the benefit of new and existing rural communities. Similar impacts can be expected of Alternatives (SG1)1, 4 and 5 in so far as they would see the delivery of two new Garden Communities. It can also be expected that provision of such facilities would be forthcoming from all development at the level of growth required of the OAN figure, however only minor impacts have been identified for the remaining alternatives in response to less dispersed broad locations for growth.									
Will it place pressure on school places, including early years?	I&O	N/A	?	?	?	?	?	N/A	
	DP	++	++	++	++	++	+	-	

Sustainability Objective / assessment criteria	I&O	Policy SG1	Alt (SG1)1	Alt (SG1)2	Alt (SG1)3	Alt (SG1)4	Alt (SG1)5	Alt (SG1)6
	DP							
<p>The Policy will ensure equitable access to schools in line with the provision requirements associated with the level of overall growth in the Borough. The Policy as well as all Alternatives that explore Garden Communities can be expected to deliver new schools in line with their indicative thresholds. Alternative (SG1)6 has been assessed as having negative impacts on this assessment criterion however in response to an assumption that the strategy would see a large number of smaller developments emanating from a focus solely on the town of Colchester. This would likely give rise to capacity issues where fewer single schemes can be expected to meet the thresholds for new school provision to be frontloaded, and it would be uncertain whether any single scheme would meet the threshold for a new secondary school.</p>								
Will existing open spaces be protected & new open spaces be created?	I&O	N/A	+	+	+	+	+	N/A
	DP	++	++	++	++	++	++	-
<p>The Policy, and those alternatives that explore the delivery of Garden Communities will ensure significant amounts of open space provision in line with Garden City principles. Alternative (SG1)6 will have negative impacts due to the significant possibility that development pressures at the level of growth required will lead to the loss of open space within the town of Colchester. In addition, at the level of growth required higher densities are likely to be sought, with pressures on private amenity space requirements and on any new open space provision in terms of size and location which could run contrary to the requirements for an increasing amount of available land in the urban area.</p>								
Will it improve the skills of the Borough's population?	I&O	N/A	+	0	0	+	+	N/A
	DP	+	+	?	?	+	+	?
<p>The Policy and the majority of the alternatives are likely to have positive impacts on this assessment criterion in those instances where Garden Community options are explored to the east, with links to the University of Essex. Employment related development linked to the university is likely to improve the skills of the Borough's population and help to retain skilled residents. In contrast, those alternatives that do not seek to develop links to the university and its expansion have been highlighted as having uncertain impacts.</p>								
6 Will it reduce actual crime and fear of crime?	I&O	N/A	+	+	+	+	+	N/A
	DP	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
<p>Positive impacts can be expected from the Policy and those alternatives that explore Garden Community options in line with Garden City principles density requirements and a comparative available space to ensure effective layouts to design out crime. In contrast, the focus of all the Borough's growth requirements being delivered in the town of Colchester could have negative impacts regarding effective layouts and also social integration.</p>								
Will it provide equitable access to employment opportunities?	I&O	N/A	+	+	+	+	+	N/A
	DP	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
<p>The Policy and all alternatives include Garden Community options, which will include employment development. It will be essential that good links by a range of modes of transport is made between residential areas and employment uses and this can be ensured at such a scale and through effective masterplanning. In addition, access to existing employment areas within the immediate area for a range of jobs will be ensured through adherence to Garden City principles. Alternative (SG1)6 will have uncertain impacts however, where a lack of available land in urban areas for both (and integrated) residential and employment development may lead to a shortage of employment proposals in favour of more profitable residential schemes.</p>								
Will it encourage healthy lifestyles?	I&O	N/A	++	++	++	++	++	N/A
	DP	++	++	++	++	++	++	?

Sustainability Objective / assessment criteria		I&O	Policy SG1	Alt (SG1)1	Alt (SG1)2	Alt (SG1)3	Alt (SG1)4	Alt (SG1)5	Alt (SG1)6
		DP							
The Policy will ensure equitable access to facilities that support healthy lifestyles in line with the provision that can be expected from new Garden Communities. Similar impacts can be expected of those alternatives that also explore Garden Community options. Alternative (SG1)6 has been assessed as having uncertain impacts associated with the possible development pressures for open space designations within the town of Colchester; however some of these impact are negated through the increased likelihood of walking and cycling as a means of transportation to town centre services and facilities.									
7	Will it protect and enhance the heritage and cultural assets of the Borough?	I&O	N/A	?	0	0	?	?	N/A
		DP	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
	In line with Garden City principles, the Policy and all of those alternatives that explore Garden Community options can be expected to protect and where necessary enhance heritage assets through effective layouts, density requirements and masterplanning. Alternative (SG1)6 has been assessed as having a negative impacts where high density urban development requirements may not be compatible within the town's historic core, and in consideration of designated and non-designated assets throughout the urban area on a case-by-case basis.								
	Will it create a high quality and coherent public realm linking the town's assets and spaces; connecting the heritage and contemporary?	I&O	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
		DP	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
	The Policy and all of those alternatives that explore Garden Community options can be expected to create a high quality and coherent public realm through effective layouts and masterplanning. Alternative (SG1)6 has been assessed as having a negative impacts where high density urban development requirements may not be compatible within aspirations for a high quality public realm, and there may be incompatibilities with the town's heritage assets and open spaces.								
8	Will it protect and enhance the historic character of the Town Centre?	I&O	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
		DP	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
	The Policy and all of those alternatives that explore Garden Community options can be expected to alleviate development pressures on the town's historic core in the long term. Alternative (SG1)6 has been assessed as having a negative impacts where high density urban development requirements may not be compatible with requirements to protect and enhance the historic character of the Town Centre.								
	Will it maintain and enhance the landscape character of the borough, including protected landscapes including the Dedham Vale AONB?	I&O	N/A	--	-	-	--	--	N/A
		DP	-	-	-	-	--	--	+
	The Policy and all of those alternatives that explore Garden Community options can be expected to have negative impacts associated with landscape due to the nature of strategic development on greenfield land. Alternatives (SG1)4 and 5 will however have significant negative impacts on landscape regarding a Garden Community in the north, which is likely to significantly impact on the Dedham Vale AONB. Alternative (SG1)6 will have a minor positive impact on landscape in response to the singular focus of development within the town of Colchester, however it should be acknowledged that impacts on townscape would likely be significantly negative at the scale of the growth requirements.								
	Will it protect and enhance designated areas of the	I&O	N/A	--	--	--	--	--	N/A
			?	?	?	?	-	-	++

Sustainability Objective / assessment criteria		I&O	Policy SG1	Alt (SG1)1	Alt (SG1)2	Alt (SG1)3	Alt (SG1)4	Alt (SG1)5	Alt (SG1)6
	countryside and coastal environment?	DP							
		DP							
	<p>The Policy and those alternatives that explore Garden Community Options to the east and west will have uncertain impacts on designated areas of countryside, acknowledging the impacts of strategic growth on greenfield land, however also in consideration of Garden City principles that seek to ensure a surrounding belt of countryside around each Garden Community to prevent sprawl. It should also be acknowledged that all strategy options, in particular the preferred Policy approach, all seek to direct growth to the main town of Colchester in the first instance and within the scale of impacts highlighted above it can be expected that those alternatives that direct growth commensurate to the settlement hierarchy will have more positive impacts than those that do not. Alternatives (SG1)4 and 5 have been assessed as having negative impacts in accordance with the Dedham Vale AONB in close proximity. Alternative (SG1)6 will have a significant positive impact in accordance with a singular focus for the Borough's growth needs within the town of Colchester.</p>								
	Will it protect and improve biodiversity?	I&O	N/A	--	--	--	--	--	N/A
		DP	?	?	?	?	?	?	?
	<p>There will be uncertain impacts on biodiversity associated with the Policy and all of the Alternatives commensurate to the level of growth required. This is likely to put pressure on habitats, however it should be acknowledged that such impacts are considered in the Local Plan HRA / AA in terms of international sites and are addressed on the smaller scale through effective policy requirements. Impacts are not identified as negative at this stage as biodiversity features can be successfully enhanced through integration within Garden Communities and this should be included into forthcoming masterplans. In addition, the scale of Garden Community options can ensure that any required biodiversity offsetting is viable. Alternative (SG1)6, will have an uncertain impact on biodiversity due to the possible pressure on open space and town centre wildlife designations in response to the probable need for such areas to be developed. In addition, the impacts of increased densities on previously developed land that may correspond to brownfield habitats could amount to mitigation measures or integration not being viable.</p>								
	Will it improve environmental quality in terms of water, air and soil quality?	I&O	N/A	-	-	-	-	-	N/A
		DP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<p>The Policy and all those alternatives that explore Garden Community options can be said to have negative impacts on soil quality in line with the significant reduction in agricultural land required. The impacts highlighted for Alternative (SG1)6, exploring the Borough's growth being contained within the town of Colchester will not see a reduction in agricultural land, however is likely to exacerbate air quality conditions in the town associated with transport emissions and impacts on AQMAs as well as the cumulative negative connotations of building emissions within the Borough's largest settlement.</p>								
	Will it reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions?	I&O	N/A	-	-	-	-	-	N/A
9		DP	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
	<p>It can be said that growth at the required level will lead to increased pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, however the probability that developments can mitigate their resultant impacts is heightened through Garden Communities and requirements to improve sustainable transport infrastructure and incorporate energy efficiency and renewable energy schemes. In response to this the Policy has been highlighted as having positive impacts, as have those alternatives that explore the premise of Garden Communities. Alternative (SG1)6 will have uncertain impacts in comparison through a smaller likelihood of associated infrastructure provision and improvements assisting in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.</p>								
	Will it support the delivery of renewable energy schemes?	I&O	N/A	?	?	?	?	?	N/A
		DP	+	+	+	+	+	+	?

Sustainability Objective / assessment criteria		I&O	Policy SG1	Alt (SG1)1	Alt (SG1)2	Alt (SG1)3	Alt (SG1)4	Alt (SG1)5	Alt (SG1)6
		DP							
<p>It can be expected that adherence to the aspirations of incorporating renewable schemes are more achievable and viable through the Policy and those alternatives that explore Garden Community options. In comparison, an uncertain impact has been highlighted for Alternative (SG1)6 in line with an assumption that a larger number of smaller schemes would not lead to renewable energy schemes through the principles of economies of scale and the integration of schemes and masterplanning of growth at the strategic level.</p>									
Will it help to reduce, reuse and recycle resources and minimise waste?	I&O	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
	DP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<p>It can be expected that the Policy and all the alternative options will have ‘no impact’ on this assessment criterion at this stage and for the purposes of comparison; this consideration is more to relevant to the Development Management process rather than any spatial distribution strategy.</p>									
10 Will it reduce the risk of flooding?	I&O	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
	DP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	?
<p>The Policy and the majority of the Alternatives can be expected to reduce the risk of flooding in accordance with policy considerations and requirements and site selection methodology. An uncertain impact has been highlighted for Alternative (SG1)6 in response to the possible difficulty of providing the most effective and sustainable mitigation solutions as higher densities and also in consideration of the resultant effects of surface water by focusing the entirety of the Borough’s growth needs within an urban environment.</p>									
Will it deliver effective SUDS and improve drainage?	I&O	N/A	+	+	+	+	+	+	N/A
	DP	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	?
<p>The Policy and the majority of the Alternatives can be expected to deliver effective SuDS in accordance with policy considerations and requirements. An uncertain impact has been highlighted for Alternative (SG1)6 in response to the possible difficulty of providing the most effective and sustainable solutions as higher densities and also in consideration of the resultant effects of surface water by focusing the entirety of the Borough’s growth needs within an urban environment.</p>									
Will it affect the amount of water available for extraction?	I&O	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
	DP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<p>It can be expected that the Policy and all the alternative options will have ‘no impact’ on this assessment criterion at this stage and for the purposes of comparison; this consideration is more to relevant to the overall level of growth in the Plan Area rather than any spatial distribution strategy.</p>									
Will it promote water efficiency and reduce water usage levels per household?	I&O	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
	DP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<p>It can be expected that the Policy and all the alternative options will have ‘no impact’ on this assessment criterion at this stage and for the purposes of comparison; this consideration is more to relevant to the Development Management process rather than any spatial distribution strategy.</p>									
Will it improve water quality?	I&O	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A
	DP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Sustainability Objective / assessment criteria	I&O	Policy SG1	Alt (SG1)1	Alt (SG1)2	Alt (SG1)3	Alt (SG1)4	Alt (SG1)5	Alt (SG1)6
	DP							
It can be expected that the Policy and all the alternative options will have 'no impact' on this assessment criterion at this stage and for the purposes of comparison; this consideration is more to relevant to the overall level of growth in the Plan Area rather than any spatial distribution strategy.								

Note: 'I&O': Those impacts identified through the Issues and Options SA

'DP': Those impacts identified through this Draft Publication SA in light of updated evidence

5.1.4 Mitigation / recommendations

No recommendations are made for the Plan's Vision and Objectives at this stage.

5.1.5 Reasons for selecting the preferred option in light of the reasonable alternatives

Option / Alternative	Reason for selection / rejection
Policy SG1	As stated in the Local Plan, <i>'The Borough clearly contains sufficient undeveloped land to accommodate required growth in alternative locations, however Sustainability Appraisal work has discounted many of these potential alternative locations on the basis of environmental constraints. As noted in the Explanation above, the preferred Spatial Strategy has evolved from firstly, consideration of the individual characteristics and capacity of different parts of the Borough and secondly, consideration of the overall linkages and functionality of settlements within the area and the best strategy for enhancing their sustainability.'</i>
Alternative (SG1)1	The Alternative fails to incorporate an element of proportionate growth in the Borough's sustainable villages, which require an element of growth in order to maintain the viability of key services that support the village and wider rural areas.
Alternative (SG1)2	The allocation of a single Garden Community option is likely to increase development pressures in the urban area of Colchester and the Rural District Centres and lead to the required allocation of a potentially significant number of peripheral and unsustainable sites for development. In addition, the Alternative fails to incorporate an element of proportionate growth in the Borough's sustainable villages, which require an element of growth in order to maintain the viability of key services that support the village and wider rural areas.
Alternative (SG1)3	The allocation of a single Garden Community option is likely to increase development pressures in the urban area of Colchester and the Rural District Centres and lead to the required allocation of a potentially significant number of peripheral and unsustainable sites for development.
Alternative (SG1)4	The allocations of two Garden Communities in relatively close proximity to each other is likely to create significant infrastructure pressures north east of the town of Colchester, even in consideration of infrastructure provision as part of the Garden Communities. In addition, the environmental impacts of focusing development in this area are likely to be cumulatively significant and a Garden Community to the north of the town has been discounted due to the environmental constraints in the broad area.
Alternative (SG1)5	The allocations of two Garden Communities in relatively close proximity to each other is likely to create significant infrastructure pressures north east of the town of

Option / Alternative	Reason for selection / rejection
	Colchester, even in consideration of infrastructure provision as part of the Garden Communities. In addition, the environmental impacts of focusing development in this area are likely to be cumulatively significant and a Garden Community to the north of the town has been discounted due to the environmental constraints in the broad area.
Alternative (SG1)6	Development solely in the town of Colchester is considered an unreasonable alternative to meet the Borough's OAN requirements due to a lack of available land and the unsuitability of development at the densities required to meet the Borough's growth and associated infrastructure requirements. The alternative would also not meet needs in more rural areas.

5.2 Policy SG2 – Housing Delivery

As provided in Section One of the Local Plan (please additionally see the separate corresponding SA of Section One), Colchester BC has reached agreement with other local Essex authorities, including Braintree, Chelmsford and Tendring, to identify sufficient deliverable sites or broad locations for growth to 2033 to meet Objectively Assessed Need for new development land.

Policy SG2 sets out the minimum provision of homes required between 2017 and 2033 in accordance with the Plan's evidence based housing target. This housing target has been developed in line with national guidance, beginning with agreement on the effective market area for housing. The boundaries of Colchester's Strategic Housing Market Area have been determined to also include Braintree, Chelmsford and Tendring. Housing provision is made up of existing commitments (which includes sites with planning permission and sites allocated in the adopted local plan which are being re-allocated) and new allocations identified in the emerging Local Plan.

National planning policy requires the Local Plan to ensure that the minimum housing requirement can be delivered with confidence. It is therefore necessary to identify broad locations and sites that are available and deliverable over the plan period for new housing to supplement existing completions, permissions and allocations. This involves firstly ensuring that the selection of each area programmed in this plan for new housing development aligns with the location's place in the Spatial Hierarchy set forth in Policy SG1. The number of new dwellings for each area then follows on from firstly, the broad distribution established by the Spatial Strategy and secondly the analysis of capacity, deliverability, suitability and proportionality carried out by the Council through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment and this Sustainability Appraisal.

POLICY SG2 – HOUSING DELIVERY

The Local Planning Authority will plan, monitor and manage the delivery of at least 14,720 new homes in Colchester Borough between 2017 and 2033. The housing target is based on a robust Objectively Assessed Need figure of 920 homes a year and provides alignment with the targets for the delivery of employment land.

The overall distribution of new housing, as shown in Table SG2, is guided by the settlement hierarchy set out in the Spatial Strategy and Policy SG1. New housing development will be focused on the following key areas:

- Colchester urban area (Place policies for Central, North, South, East and West Colchester)
- Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Community (Section 1 Policy SP8)

- Colchester / Braintree Borders Garden Community (Section1 Policy SP9)

Detailed decisions on the location, type and level of development to be carried out in the Garden Communities will be made through joint plans to be agreed with the relevant local planning authority, either Braintree (west) or Tendring (east), as outlined in Section One of this plan.

To maintain the vitality and viability of the Borough's smaller towns and villages, an appropriate level of new development will be brought forward in Sustainable Settlements to support new homes and economic and social development. Details on those allocations are provided in Policies SS1- SS16 (Sustainable Settlements).

5.2.1 Alternatives Considered

Alternatives to the OAN figures, and Garden Community options and alternatives have been explored in the relevant sections of the Section One SA. Individual site allocations and alternatives have been explored and assessed elsewhere in this report.

In reflection of local specifics, the SHMA / OAN Report (and methodology) identified a lower housing figure within 'Table 9.5 Housing targets – suggested ranges'. This was identified as:

Alternative (SG2)1: A lower dwelling per year target of 903 (OAN Report, 2015)

In addition, the Local Plan, at section 4.32 specifies two other alternatives to the Spatial Strategy as set out in Policy SG2. These are:

Alternative (SG2)2: Restrict allocations to plan period - Confine allocations to those which can be delivered entirely within the plan period.

Alternative (SG2)3: Provide a more dispersed pattern of new development

Work throughout the Local Plan process also re-defined the settlement hierarchy regarding the sustainability of settlements and their suitability to accept further growth in the plan period in a sustainable way. This has led to the re-categorisation of settlements, notably with Dedham / Dedham Heath and Birch / Birch Green being considered unsustainable settlements. The principle of accommodating growth in lower categorised settlement types within the hierarchy was tested as an option, but ultimately one that could be considered unreasonable. Nevertheless, the principle of accepting growth at 'other villages' was considered:

Alternative (SG2)4: Allocating land for growth purposes in and around 'other villages'.

5.2.2 Significant, Secondary and Temporal Effects

The following table explores the sustainability impacts of the preferred approach of Policy SG2 and the identified alternatives:

Table 7: Appraisal of Policy SG2

Sustainability Objective (SO) / assessment criteria		Policy SG2	Alt (SG2)1	Alt (SG2)2	Alt (SG2)3	Alt (SG2)4
1	Will it deliver the number of houses needed to support the existing and growing population?	++	+	++	++	++
	Will it provide more affordable homes across the	++	++	++	++	++

Sustainability Objective (SO) / assessment criteria		Policy SG2	Alt (SG2)1	Alt (SG2)2	Alt (SG2)3	Alt (SG2)4
	Borough?					
	Will it deliver a range of housing types to meet the diverse needs of the Borough?	++	++	++	++	++
	Will it deliver well designed and sustainable housing?	++	++	?	?	?
2	Will it promote regeneration?	++	++	?	-	-
	Will it reduce the need for development on greenfield land?	-	-	-	-	-
	Will it provide good accessibility by a range of modes of transport?	?	?	?	-	--
	Will densities make efficient use of land?	++	++	?	-	-
	Will a mix of uses be provided?	++	++	?	?	?
3	Will it improve the delivery of a range of employment opportunities to support the growing population?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it maintain an appropriate balance between different types of retail uses and other activities in the Borough's centres?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it support business innovation, diversification, entrepreneurship and changing economies?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it support tourism, heritage and the arts?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it help sustain the rural economy?	+	+	+	++	++
4	Will it reduce the need to travel?	++	++	?	-	-
	Will the levels of sustainable travel increase?	++	++	?	-	--
	Will it improve sustainable transport infrastructure and linkages?	++	++	?	-	-
5	Will it provide equitable access to education, recreation and community facilities?	+	+	?	-	--
	Will it place pressure on school places, including early years?	+	+	?	-	--
	Will existing open spaces be protected & new open spaces be created?	+	+	+	+	?
	Will it improve the skills of the Borough's population?	+	+	?	?	?
6	Will it reduce actual crime and fear of crime?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it provide equitable access to employment opportunities?	+	+	?	-	-
	Will it encourage healthy lifestyles?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
7	Will it protect and enhance the heritage and cultural assets of the Borough?	?	?	-	+	?
	Will it create a high quality and coherent public realm linking the town's assets and spaces; connecting the	?	?	-	?	?

Sustainability Objective (SO) / assessment criteria		Policy SG2	Alt (SG2)1	Alt (SG2)2	Alt (SG2)3	Alt (SG2)4
	heritage and contemporary?					
	Will it protect and enhance the historic character of the Town Centre?	?	?	-	+	+
8	Will it maintain and enhance the landscape character of the borough, including protected landscapes including the Dedham Vale AONB?	?	?	-	?	?
	Will it protect and enhance designated areas of the countryside and coastal environment?	?	?	-	-	-
	Will it protect and improve biodiversity?	?	?	-	?	?
	Will it improve environmental quality in terms of water, air and soil quality?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
9	Will it reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it support the delivery of renewable energy schemes?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it help to reduce, reuse and recycle resources and minimise waste?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	Will it reduce the risk of flooding?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it deliver effective SUDS and improve drainage?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it affect the amount of water available for extraction?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it promote water efficiency and reduce water usage levels per household?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Will it improve water quality?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

All options can be expected to deliver the number of houses needed to support the existing and growing population of the Borough (SO1). A total of 920 dwellings per annum over the plan period can be expected to be delivered through the preferred policy approach and alternatives (SG2)2 and (SG2)3, and the lower figure of 903 as stated in (SG2)1 can be seen as additionally appropriate in so far as it still reflects the lower limit of the suggest range within the SHMA / OAN Report (2015). The principle difference between the preferred policy figure and the 903 reflected in Alternative (SG2)1 responds to the Borough additionally meeting part of Tendring District Council's needs (as part of the Housing Market Area [HMA]) that are unlikely to be met due to a lack of available and suitable land for allocation. For this reason only minor positive impacts have been highlighted for Alternative (SG2)1. For more information on strategic matters across the HMA, please see the appraisal of housing needs in the SA of Section One of the Local Plan.

In terms of comparable impacts across the remaining Sustainability Objectives, it can be assumed that Alternative (SG2)1 will have similar impacts as the preferred approach in conjunction with conforming to the Plan's preferred Section Two Spatial Strategy and that of the North Essex authorities as specified in the Local Plan's Section One. The key differences between the preferred policy approach and those of Alternatives (SG2)2, (SG2)3 and (SG2)4 largely relate to uncertainty as to how growth is distributed. The

appraisal assumes that Alternative (SG2)2 will lead to more marginal and unsustainable allocations that are likely to be focused around the main town of Colchester and the Rural District Centres. Such a focus is likely to exacerbate infrastructure capacities, with development being unlikely to fund new infrastructure provision or meeting thresholds for requirements for new provision or improvements through critical mass. This leads to a large amount of uncertain impacts associated with a lack of definition as to how the alternative would respond to a Spatial Strategy; it being likely that allocations would respond to those that are independently the least constrained options, but not conforming to any ideals of distribution or providing any wider benefits. Alternatives (SG2)3 and (SG2)4 respond directly to a more dispersed distribution with (SG2)4 directing growth to unsustainable locations in terms of access to services and facilities, which reflects more development in 'other villages', rural areas and the countryside, with again no direct focus on providing additional infrastructure or wider benefits. The alternative would also not respond to sustainable travel patterns and impacts would be comparably worse than those associated with a more urban focus, or those that would require new settlements in line with the preferred Spatial Strategies of both Sections One and Two of the Local Plan.

5.2.3 Mitigation / recommendations

No recommendations are made for the Policy SG2 at this stage.

5.2.4 Reasons for selecting the preferred option in light of the reasonable alternatives

Option / Alternative	Reason for selection / rejection
Policy SG2	The NPPF is clear that the HMA as whole should work to meet its OAN in full, provided that it has the sustainable capacity to do so consistent with the policies in the NPPF. The OAN Report stated that, 'pending agreement from Tendring to either meet the SNPP 2012 projections or not, it would be sensible for Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester to plan for the high end of the ranges shown in the table.' As such, the preferred Policy SG2 was selected.
Alternative (SG2)1	The NPPF is clear that the HMA as whole should work to meet its OAN in full, provided that it has the sustainable capacity to do so consistent with the policies in the NPPF. The OAN Report stated that, 'pending agreement from Tendring to either meet the SNPP 2012 projections or not, it would be sensible for Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester to plan for the high end of the ranges shown in the table.' The alternative was rejected due to a lack of available land in Tendring District to accommodate a higher range of dwellings per year across the HMA, as explored in the Section One SA. As such, the implications were that the remaining authorities in the HMA are required to meet this residual need in their administrative areas.
Alternative (SG2)2	This would preclude the development of Garden Communities, given their long lead time, and would not allow the Council the opportunity to optimise long-term planning.
Alternative (SG2)3	This option would spread the impact of new development more widely across the Borough, but would not secure the critical mass of new supporting infrastructure required to support sustainable growth and could therefore be expected to result in higher overall levels of growth in villages and within existing communities; congestion; and restricted infrastructure.

Alternative (SG2)4	The level of sustainability in some settlements within the Borough has needed revision throughout the plan-making process. Other Villages have been deemed unsustainable in terms of their ability to receive more growth in the plan period.
--------------------	---