

Colchester Borough Council
Focused Review of the Local Plan
Reply to Inspector's Post Hearing Note 1 (IED-06)

The Council has sought to address the matters raised in Post Hearing Note 1 (<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=12322&p=0>) by preparing the attached list of Proposed Further Modifications for consultation. The modifications include those matters which the Inspector could recommend to make the Focused Review document sound. In particular, this includes options for clarifying the wording of the Centres and Employment policies in relation to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Post Hearing note makes it clear that the Council needs to consult on both the option of deleting all proposed changes to policies dealing with centres and employment issues as well as the option of modifying them further to ensure compliance with the NPPF and avoidance of internal inconsistencies with other parts of the Local Plan.

The Proposed Further Modifications table is accordingly divided into two parts. Part 1 includes the Council's preferred options for further modifications, which involves the deletion of centres and employment policies from the Focused Review, while Part 2 includes the option of making further changes to those policies.

The Council's preference for the option of deleting the centres and employment policies from the Focused Review reflects the following considerations:

- Discussion at the hearing sessions highlighted the complexities of ensuring changes in one policy did not create confusion or create inconsistencies with other policies in the adopted Local Plan. The Council considers that deleting the policies from the review is the most straightforward way of avoiding confusion in the short term.
- Over the longer term, the Council has commenced a Full Review of its Local Plan which will allow any issues of non-conformity with the NPPF to be addressed in a comprehensive way.
- The Council is content that the overall focus of its policies are consistent with the NPPF, given that the NPPF carries forward the commitment to sustainable development contained in Government policies at the time of adoption of the Core Strategy in 2008 and the Development Policies in 2010. The Council will accordingly argue that its policies remain as a valid basis for the determination of planning applications, given that they are supported by an evidence base establishing their appropriateness for the unique circumstances of Colchester.

The policy wordings presented for consultation in Part 2 of the table are intended to address the detailed points raised in the Inspector's Post-Hearing note concerning the need for consistency and clarification to ensure the soundness of the plan. The Council as requested has looked at the Local Plan as a whole to evaluate any follow-on implications of modifying the centres and employment policies within the Focused Review. The wordings accordingly include references to where Focused Review policies would supersede and update relevant policies that were not included within the scope of the Focused Review. A 'tracked changes' version of the Centres and Employment policies included within the Focused Review has been prepared to allow all the proposed modifications to be seen in context.