

Stewardship for Garden Communities Topic Paper

**Braintree District Council Local Plan
Colchester Borough Council Local Plan
Tendring District Council Local Plan**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 A key part of the development strategy as set out in Section 1 of the Local Plans for Colchester Borough Council (CBC), Braintree District Council (BDC) and Tendring District Council (TDC) is the inclusion of a small number of large scale 'Garden Communities'. These will be comprehensively planned new settlements containing a wide range of services and facilities and will set the basis for growth across the North Essex area both for the current plan period but also for future plan periods.
- 1.2 A key component of the proposed Garden Communities is to establish and implement an appropriate form of long term stewardship for open space, public realm and other assets that may be developed in the Garden Communities. This topic paper has been prepared to provide information relating to the options for stewardship that have been considered for the Garden Communities.
- 1.3 This paper sets out:
 - The importance of long term stewardship to the Garden Communities concept;
 - A summary of options for long term stewardship that have been considered;
 - Implications for stewardship in delivery of the Garden Communities;
 - Decision making in respect of stewardship and the Garden Communities

2 Why is long term stewardship important to Garden Communities

2.1 The Town & Country Planning Association (TCPA), founded in 1899 by Ebeneezer Howard has had an important role in considering the application of key Garden City principles and have had a strong influence on planning and placemaking right up to today. Whilst there is no formal statutory definition to what a Garden City entails, the TCPA have published guidance and a series of key principles that they consider should be embodied in any approach, which set the concept apart from traditional or standard types of development. These key principles as set out on the TCPA's website (<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/garden-city-principles>) are:

- strong vision, leadership and community engagement;
- land value capture for the benefit of the community;
- community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets;
- mixed-tenure homes that are affordable for ordinary people;
- a strong local jobs offer in the Garden City itself, with a variety of employment opportunities within easy commuting distance of homes;
- high-quality imaginative design (including homes with gardens), combining the very best of town and country living to create healthy homes in vibrant communities;
- generous green space linked to the wider natural environment, including a mix of public and private networks of well managed, high-quality gardens, tree-lined streets and open spaces;
- opportunities for residents to grow their own food, including generous allotments;
- access to strong local cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable neighbourhoods; and
- integrated and accessible transport systems – with a series of settlements linked by rapid transport providing a full range of employment opportunities (as set out in Howard's vision of the 'Social City').

2.2 The third of these principles - *community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets* – is important as it provides for the long term management and control of assets that are important to a sustainable new community. Key components of this principle include:

- A clear understanding of how the assets generated by the development process will be managed on behalf of the community in perpetuity
- Right governance and legal structures for asset management are essential – stewardship body
- Finance for management and maintenance of community assets needs to be considered from the outset

- Assets & utilities can be managed to generate income – but need to be planned appropriately from the outset
 - Meaningful community participation is necessary to enable people to engage in the management of their new community.
- 2.3 Large scale new communities can have extensive green space, recreational areas, community and other facilities and public realm areas that require management and maintenance in the long term. Through deciding on and implementing an appropriate form of long term stewardship for a new community, and ensuring that the costs associated with that is factored in as a project delivery cost, the sustainable management of the assets of that community will be provided for in the long term.
- 2.4 If the matter of long term stewardship is not considered early on and hardwired into delivery, financial and governance arrangements, there is the risk that a patchwork of management and maintenance approaches to the various public assets within the community arises that may not have sufficient financial support to be self-sustaining ion the long term, and will be very difficult for the community to engage with in a meaningful way. Additionally, if appropriate stewardship arrangements are not established, there is a risk that the responsibility and cost of management and maintenance will fall back on local authorities, without sufficient funding.
- 2.5 Proper arrangements to secure long term stewardship is one of the garden city principles that has sometimes failed in respect of large scale development. The parts of Letchworth in common ownership had to be rescued by Parliament in 1962 – it has its own Act of Parliament. The Moorpool estate in Birmingham was bailed out by the Lottery and private donors. Equally there are examples where arrangements for long term stewardship appear to be working well and fulfilling their objectives – for example, the Parks Trust has a very substantial endowment used to management and maintain an extensive green estate in Milton Keynes.

3 Approach to stewardship in the North Essex Garden Communities

- 3.1 The North Essex Garden Communities Charter (June 2016) sets out a series of guiding principles for the proposed new communities. Principle 8 addresses Active Local Stewardship and states '*The Garden Communities will be developed and managed in perpetuity with the direct involvement of their residents and businesses; residents will be directly engaged in the long-term management and stewardship, fostering a shared sense of ownership and identity.*' Implementation of this principle focuses on (i) Creating assets that fosters the emergence of community; and (ii) Provision for long term stewardship and social sustainability. The latter refers to establishment of an organisation such as a community trust or similar to empower the new

community from the start and is provided with sufficient financial resources to deliver on its role.

- 3.2 Policies SP7, SP8, SP9 and SP10 in the joint Section 1 of the publication draft Local Plans relate specifically to the proposed garden communities, and each includes the following wording relating to stewardship:

Establishment at an early stage in the development of the garden communities, of appropriate and sustainable long-term governance and stewardship arrangements for community assets including green space, public realm areas and community and other relevant facilities; such arrangements to be funded by the developments and include community representation to ensure residents have a stake in the long term development, stewardship and management of their community.

These principles are elaborated upon in the North Essex Garden Community Charter.

- 3.3 Following research and evaluation of various different forms and legal models of stewardship bodies available, the following sets out a number of principles agreed in relation to stewardship and long term governance for the North Essex Garden Communities:

- Stewardship in the context of the North Essex Garden Communities means stewardship bodies charged with responsibility for managing and maintaining community assets in perpetuity; and also undertaking community development activity. Community assets will include parks, open spaces and informal leisure provision; community facilities such as community halls and other public assets; formal leisure facilities; wider public realm areas such as public squares and car parks; income-generating commercial property such as retail or business units; other community assets that may be created such as local energy production schemes.
- Given the scale and distinctive nature of the three proposed communities, one stewardship body should be established for each proposed garden community which reflects the unique opportunity of that community.
- The stewardship bodies should be open to democratic, transparent and scrutiny procedures.
- The legal form of the stewardship bodies could be a charitable trust or parish council. However, at this stage, other potential legal forms have not been dismissed and the decision on the form of each stewardship body will be determined by the eventual delivery mechanism established for the garden communities.

- The stewardship bodies should be sustainable as entities and should include appropriate income generating opportunities.

4 Implications for stewardship in delivery of the Garden Communities

- 4.1 As the proposals for the garden communities evolve, the range and extent of green infrastructure and other community assets in each of the three communities to be managed and maintained by the stewardship bodies will be clarified, as will the associated cost implications and funding arrangements. It will be important that stewardship involves both 'hard' infrastructure such as new means of transportation, health and educational facilities, and generous amounts of open space as well as 'soft' infrastructure to support social infrastructure and community inclusion. The preparation of Development Plan Documents will provide further guidance on the process for agreeing priorities, funding and delivery of well-managed hard and soft infrastructure for the Garden Communities.
- 4.2 Agreements with the landowners will need to make provision for the cost of endowing the stewardship bodies with assets that cover their stewardship costs, to be reflected in the land value.
- 4.3 The stewardship bodies themselves may also be given the ability to raise revenue from assets and potentially from residents through a local levy.

5 Decision making in respect of stewardship and the Garden Communities

- 5.1 The general consensus is that it is better to establish the stewardship bodies early on in the delivery process, following appropriate consultation, in order that they have a key role in the delivery of the new communities from the start.
- 5.2 Consideration of the appropriate stewardship model(s) to establish for the North Essex Garden Communities will continue to evolve as proposals for the garden communities develop. In respect of decision making on issues relating to the format of stewardship entities to be established, funding arrangements, and timing of establishment, the final decisions will be made by the delivery mechanisms/bodies established in due course.