



Local Development Framework Core Strategy

Examination - 24 June to 11 July, 2008



Essex County Council

Hearing Statement in respect of Matter 10



MATTER 10

IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND FLEXIBILITY

Whether there are clear mechanisms in place for implementation and monitoring and whether these are flexible to enable them to deal with changing circumstances.

Tests: 8 & 9

Policies: SD2, Chapter 6

ISSUES

(a) Have infrastructure items been adequately identified and costed?

The Infrastructure Trajectory (CBC/EB/085), which is attached, provides a detailed list of infrastructure needed to support Growth Area development and overall sustainable growth in the Borough. Infrastructure is split into two tables; 'necessary' and 'local and wider benefit' projects. The Trajectory provides clarity on the provision of infrastructure by identifying the partners responsible for funding infrastructure, the funding status, when the project would be delivered and how it is linked to development. The costings for the Transportation Projects are set out in the Transportation Topic Paper (CBC/EB/060).

The Council is working closely with The Haven Gateway Partnership on developing the Integrated Development Programme¹ (IDP) (CBC/EB/080). The IDP aligns with the Core Strategy and identifies the strategic investments that will be required to unlock, facilitate, generate and sustain growth. The strategic projects are reflected in the 'necessary' infrastructure trajectory table and graph. The IDP specifies the funding mechanisms and partnerships needed to provide them. The IDP approach is being piloted in the East of England region in four areas and brings together for the first time 'the disciplines and timescales linked to new approaches to spatial planning and those associated with key funding cycles' (p.111). The IDP demonstrates that Core Strategy proposals reflect sub-regional objectives, and will accordingly be put forward in Haven Gateway funding bids. It will also set a precedent for further cross-boundary sub-regional partnership working on Multi-Area Agreements and future joint Core Strategy work. It provides overall costs for the identified investment packages in the Core Strategy and Haven Gateway priority areas of North Colchester, East Colchester and the Town Centre. The types of projects identified in the IDP include major transport and infrastructure projects such as the new A12 junction, land decontamination on major brownfield regeneration sites, green links, and public transport improvements. Information on risks and mitigation is included for each package to provide confidence in the flexibility and deliverability of the packages.

¹ Integrated Development Programme – a document intended to bring together projects and funding, demonstrate delivery, indicate priorities especially to secure government funding to develop projects for delivery.

Local and Wider Benefit Infrastructure: Generic provision of health, education, transport and community facilities will need to be followed up by more detailed project development through master plans in conjunction with the relevant service providers. This reflects the fact that costings for infrastructure can be subject to variation for a number of reasons;

- Costings for some infrastructure rely on knowing the exact nature of the proposed development. Provision of school places, for example, varies for flats and houses and depends on size and density. Provision of health and community facilities will need to relate to specific area requirements to be identified through the planning process.
- Delivery methods for services such as health are evolving with consequent implications for costs, and co-location of facilities is increasingly seen as an important priority for service providers. The NE Essex PCT, for example has stated its commitment to:

Create opportunities for developing partnerships with other organisations to enhance the range of services on offer, and to enable the transfer of services from centralised hospital settings into the community, closer to where patients live. (Sec. 2.2, Estates Strategy 2008-11 – CBC/EB/065).

However, greater clarification will be sought through each subsequent LDF document development and planning processes.

- (b) Are the delivery mechanisms and timescale for implementation of the policies clearly identified? Where implementation is outside the direct control of the LPA, is there evidence of commitment of relevant organisations to implement the policies?

The Infrastructure Trajectory (CBC/EB/085) provides information on the partners and timescales for delivering the Core Strategy. The Borough Council already has a successful model for managing future development in its approach to development of the existing four Regeneration areas. The Regeneration Team within the Council works closely with Essex County Council and developers to deliver detailed Master Plans e.g. St Botolphs and The Garrison. A joint Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council Member Renaissance Partnership Board meet on a regular basis to provide political direction on regeneration. This approach has succeeded in securing major new facilities such as Firstsite and the Community Stadium, funded by a variety of sources; in securing high quality design through design competitions (award winning designs for Firstsite and the Cultural Quarter); and in securing improvements to the public realm (e.g. Hythe Station). This successful approach will continue to provide the equivalent of a Local Delivery Vehicle to coordinate the Regeneration and Growth Area projects arising from the Core Strategy.

Where implementation is outside the direct control of the LPA, evidence of commitment of relevant organisations to implement the policies can be seen in such examples as:

1. The Haven Gateway Partnership (see 10(a)1) incorporates a Partnership Board and Transport Forum on which the Council has elected membership. The Partnership is working to develop a co-ordinated approach to addressing infrastructure delivery constraints across the sub-region through the development and implementation of the Integrated Development Programme. Working closely with the County Council agreement was achieved on how Growth Area Funding should be allocated between planning, regeneration and transportation projects.
2. Identification of projects outside the control of the Borough Council has been made on the basis of consultation with the relevant authorities, i.e. transport, health, education, etc. and compatibility with their development plans. Examples of joint working include:
 - i. The Council Transportation and Planning Policy officers meet regularly with Essex County Council (ECC) Highways and Transportation officers to progress agreed work programmes for the LDF and transport infrastructure issues. Additionally, Colchester and ECC members and officers meet quarterly to agree priorities for transportation policy and delivery work.
 - ii. The North East Essex PCT Assistant Director of Public Health spends one day each week at The Council offices and provides input on health issues to the bi-weekly Development Team. The Development Team is composed of a wide range of Council officers and partners including Essex County Council and the Primary Care Trust, who discuss potential developments in the town, their need for supporting infrastructure, and the level of planning gain developers would be expected to contribute.
3. Additionally, the Core Strategy is aligned with the priorities in the Community Strategy, and the Colchester 2020 Partnership provides an active forum for promoting cross-sector working to implement policies for sustainable development. For example, the Partnership is currently promoting a Design Challenge to encourage high-quality design as well as a Carbon Challenge to reduce the borough's carbon footprint.

- (c) Does the Core Strategy contain sufficient targets and milestones relating to delivery of the policies and the key objectives?

Core Strategy Appendix C, Monitoring Indicators sets out the objectives for each policy area and the wide range of indicators that will be used to measure their success which will then be reported on in the Annual Monitoring Report (CBC/SUB/013). The AMR includes both Core Output Indicators prescribed by national guidance (CBC/NAT/054) as well as a range of Local Indicators specific to Colchester. Additional work has now

been completed on targets and monitoring in response to The Inspectors request (CBC/EB/084). These will feed in to the Annual Monitoring Report.

- (d) Is it clear how these are to be measured and linked to production of the AMR?

The Monitoring section at the end of Chapter 6 of the Core Strategy explains how the indicators included in Appendix C will be used to monitor the implementation of the core policies, and notes that the indicators are consistent with those employed in the Sustainability Appraisal (CBC/SUB/002) as well as the AMR (CBC/SUB/013). The AMR has been prepared in accordance with Section 35 of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and contains detailed information on the implementation of the Local Development Scheme and the extent to which policies set out in Local Development Documents are being achieved.

Significant improvements have been made to the AMR since its first publication in 2004/05 although the Council are still working towards filling some of the gaps in data provision and actively developing our monitoring arrangements. The Council has implemented Civica software, an Authority Public Protection system which allows the development control team to enter key information for each planning application. The system became operational in February 2007 so that a full year of data could be collected and available in the 2007/08 AMR. To demonstrate our commitment to accurate data collection and monitoring officers are currently working with the development control team to scrutinise this first year of data and strengthen it where necessary with manual data entry. An analysis of the monitoring system, along with recommended improvements will then be taken forward into the next phase of the Civica system to ensure more robust monitoring in future AMRs. The Council also works with Essex County Council via a service level agreement to monitor and provide data for both the AMR and EERA.

- (e) Do the processes for measuring the success of the DPD accord with national guidance?

In line with the requirements of PPS12 (CBC/NAT/008), the Core Strategy includes a systematic monitoring and review process centred on the Annual Monitoring Report and its annual review of the Local Development Framework. Full or partial revisions of the Core Strategy will be programmed in the Local Development Scheme as needed, in line with Government guidance in the PPS12 Companion Guide (CBC/NAT/008a). The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment will be updated annually in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 3 (CBC/NAT/002). In accordance with the Strategic Environmental

Assessment Regulations, the Sustainability Appraisal will be monitored and form part of the AMR.

- (f) How would monitoring be linked to mechanisms for bringing forward alternative housing sites if necessary?

The Housing Delivery section of Chapter 6, and the response to Matters 2 and 3 all explain that the high current rate of housing delivery and extant planning permissions provide a high level of confidence that Colchester will meet the minimum housing requirements of the East of England Plan (CBC/REG/014). The Core Strategy provides flexibility for maintaining housing delivery by the allocation of at least 3000 additional homes on greenfield sites and a recognition that the timing of this development can be adjusted if housing delivery rates suggest a need for early release of these sites. The Housing Topic Paper (CBC/EB/058) provides detail, assumptions and calculations that underlie this approach. The AMR includes a housing trajectory tracking progress in meeting housing delivery targets. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment will also be reviewed annually and direct contact with house builders will identify if there are likely to be problems with delivery and why. As requested by The Inspector updated information on housing delivery is provided as CBC/EB/083. This shows that delivery rates are expected to exceed annualised housing targets. Any shortfall in meeting targets would be followed by the earlier release of sites identified through the Core Strategy and Site Allocation processes.

- (g) How does the plan demonstrate flexibility to deal with delays/non delivery of infrastructure?

Flexibility in the Core Strategy is provided by both developing multi-faceted approaches to delivery and by ensuring that policies and targets can be modified to address changing circumstances through the AMR review process. The Haven Gateway Integrated Development Programme includes an analysis of the timing, critical path, risks and mitigation for the 'Spatial Packages' for North Colchester, East Colchester and Colchester Town Centre.

- (h) Should policy SD2 be re-worded for clarity regarding the contributions expected from developers?

Policy SD2 establishes the general principle that development needs to contribute to meeting community needs arising from new development at both the local and strategic level. Further clarity on specific contributions required will be developed through the Development Policies DPD and Supplementary Planning Guidance on planning contributions. It will need to take into account evolving national policy on standard charges and planning gain contributions and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

- (i) Should the Housing Trajectory be included in the Core Strategy?

Given the level of detail in the Housing Trajectory, the fact it is updated annually and the extent of fluctuation in delivery dates it is most appropriate that it continue to be included in the Annual Monitoring Report (CBC/SUB/013) to ensure that it provides a consistent source of up-to-date information. It also relates to and will be included in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

- (j) Should an Infrastructure Trajectory be included in the Core Strategy to assist monitoring of progress?

The Infrastructure Trajectory is attached in response to Inspector's Request for Information from the Council, Item 5. As the trajectory is intended to be updated regularly it is not considered appropriate to include in the Core Strategy itself but within the Annual Monitoring Report.