

North Colchester Growth Area Urban Extension Supplementary Planning Document Sustainability Statement

This Sustainability Statement is prepared in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. It effectively tells the story of the Sustainability Appraisal and its relationship with the North Colchester Growth Area Urban Extension Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Background

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes requires an environmental assessment to be made of certain plans or programmes. The objective of SEA, as defined in the Government's guidance on strategic environmental assessment, is *"to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans....with a view to promoting sustainable development"* (Article 1).

Colchester Borough Council has carried out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the North Colchester Growth Area Urban Extension SPD. This has incorporated all of the requirements of the SEA Directive and also considered the social and economic effects of the SPD.

This Sustainability Statement complies with the requirement in paragraph (1)(b)(iii) of Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 to produce a statement when a plan, which was subject to environmental assessment, is adopted.

North Colchester Growth Area Urban Extension SPD

The adopted Core Strategy (2008) identified broad areas for urban extensions, which included North Colchester, and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) (2010) identified specific sites. The SPD provides further clarity to supplement the North Colchester urban extension and will inform future planning applications for the site.

A workshop was held in December 2008 for stakeholders at the Western Homes Community Stadium in North Colchester. The event was well attended by Council officers, the landowners, their agents, the Parish Council and relevant organisations. The main purpose of the workshop was to seek the views of all stakeholders prior to the formation of options for the SPD.

Following on from this workshop work took place to establish the evidence base and another workshop was held in March 2009. This workshop involved asking small groups of stakeholders to identify what uses should be included within the site and where these should be located. A draft SPD was subsequently prepared and consulted upon in February 2010.

Further to this consultation and the completion of the Mile End and Braiswick Engagement Project (July 2011) a further draft of the SPD was prepared. This was published for consultation in January 2012.

SA Reports have been prepared to accompany each stage of the SPD. A SA Scoping Report was published for consultation in April 2009 and SA Reports were published in support of consultation on the draft SPDs in February 2010 and January 2012.

Purpose of the Sustainability Statement

Regulation 16(4) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations specifies the particulars that must be included in the adoption statement required under Regulation 16(i)(b)(iii).

Accordingly this statement sets out:

- a) how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
- (b) how the environmental report has been taken into account;
- (c) how opinions expressed in response to -
 - (i) the invitation referred to in regulation 13(2)(d);
 - (ii) action taken by the responsible authority in accordance with regulation 13(4) have been taken into account;
- (e) the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- (f) the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

Please note that criterion (d) of the regulations is not relevant to this SPD as it refers to transboundary issues with other member states.

- (a) How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan and**
(b) How the environmental report has been taken into account

Carrying out the SA has ensured that sustainability (environmental, economic and social) considerations have been integrated into the North Colchester Growth Area Urban Extension from the beginning of the plan preparation process. The principal benefit of the SA has been to identify necessary and desirable mitigation and enhancement measures.

SA work has had a very early influence on this SPD as the SA of the Site Allocations DPD recommended a number of mitigation and enhancement measures for this site, many of which were transposed into the Site Allocations DPD.

As part of scoping, and also in 2011, baseline data relevant to North Colchester was collected. The review of relevant policies, plans and programmes was updated as part of scoping in 2009 and again in 2011 to ensure that it remains up to date and documents relevant to North Colchester are included. The SA framework was slightly amended from the Site Allocations DPD SA framework to ensure that the sub-objectives are the most relevant to the SPD.

A SA Report was published for consultation in February 2010, alongside the draft SPD. A number of mitigation and enhancement measures were recommended and the SA Report referred to how mitigation and enhancement measures recommended as part of previous SA work had been integrated into the SPD.

The SA Report published for consultation in January 2012 updated the context for the SA. It also appraised the consultation draft of the SPD and compared this to the previous consultation draft. The report included comments on how the mitigation and enhancement measures recommended in the February 2010 SA Report had been incorporated into the SPD.

- (c) How opinions expressed in response to -**
(i) the invitation referred to in regulation 13(2)(d);
(ii) action taken by the responsible authority in accordance with regulation 13(4) have been taken into account

A key component of the SA process is consultation with stakeholders and the public. The consultation throughout the SA process has been in accordance with the Environmental Assessments of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and Colchester Borough's Statement of Community Involvement.

All SA Reports were sent to all statutory consultees on Colchester's Local Development Framework (LDF) consultation list, as detailed in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. All documents were also made available at Council offices, Myland Community Council office, Colchester Library, the Council's website (www.colchester.gov.uk) and on request to any

consultees. Representations made during the consultation periods were recorded and are publicly available on the Council's website.

The table, below, sets out the representations received to the various SA Reports and the Council's response.

| Stakeholder | Comment | Response |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| SA Scoping Report (April 2009) | | |
| Natural England | <p>1. The following documents should be reviewed: Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning: Incorporating the natural, built and historic environment and rural issues in plans and strategies' and Countryside in and Around Towns: A vision for connecting towns and country in the pursuit of sustainable development.</p> <p>2. English Nature's Accessible Natural Green Space Standards should be included in the baseline data.</p> <p>3. We recommend that Colchester Borough Council consider providing pathways that facilitate not only human access to High Woods form the station, but also act as habitat corridors that allow the free movement of wildlife between High Woods Country Park and other areas of suitable habitat.</p> <p>4. In biodiversity objective Natural England supports the use of the words 'enhance and improve' in the assessment criteria.</p> <p>5. Natural England is satisfied with the conclusions of HRA assessment and does not wish to comment further at this stage.</p> <p>6. Pleased to see acknowledgement of the biodiversity potential of 'Brownfield land' - would welcome its inclusion as a key message.</p> | <p>1. These documents have now been reviewed.</p> <p>2. These standards have been added to the baseline data table.</p> <p>3. Comment noted.</p> <p>4. Support noted.</p> <p>5. Comment noted.</p> <p>6. The biodiversity value of brownfield sites is already acknowledged as a key message.</p> |
| SA Report (February 2010) – | | |
| | <p>At this stage a standard question was asked about the Sustainability Appraisal and the vast majority of respondents (68%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that the sustainability appraisal provides an appropriate assessment of the proposals in the SPD. None of the statutory consultee's commented on the SA although the Environment Agency endorsed the comments at pages 58 and 59 regarding opportunities for ensuring that the long-term sustainability of new development should be accommodated within the design process from master planning to dwelling design.</p> | <p>In light of the comments the Sustainability Appraisal was reviewed prior to the consultation in 2012</p> |
| SA Report (January 2012) | | |
| Natural England | <p>Unlikely development will have an adverse impact on nearest SSSI (Bullock Wood) however environmental assessment will provide more detail.</p> | <p>Noted. Text added to SPD reflecting need for green infrastructure study and reference to distance standards.</p> |

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|------------------|--|---|
| | <p>Site likely to support a number of protected and/or biodiversity species - detailed mitigation will be required. Welcome proposals to retain habitat such as Chesterwell Wood and hedgerows/trees. A Green Infrastructure Plan should be prepared as part of the development process. Development should seek to achieve 40% informal accessible open space as far as possible. Standards suggested for proximity to natural/open space. In addition to large areas of open space, multi-functional green corridors should be used. Welcome proposals for SUDs which should be multi-functional. Landscape mitigation should be used to minimise impact of development on areas of visual significance. Satisfied with Habitats screening; believe the Sustainability Appraisal provides full consideration of relevant aspects of the environment and fully support the mitigation and enhancement measures.</p> | <p>CBC agree use of green corridors.</p> |
| <p>Myland CC</p> | <p>Myland community Council made detailed comments on the Sustainability Appraisal which are detailed in the Consultation Statement. They also provided a supplementary evaluation.</p> | <p>Government guidance on SAs for SPDs recognises that in most cases SAs will draw considerably from SA work undertaken for higher level plans and the need for new work may be limited. Considerable SA work as part of the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPDs has looked at the likely impacts of the development of the North Colchester Growth Area Urban Extension compared to other options. The SPD sits in a hierarchy and must be in conformity with adopted DPDs. It would be inappropriate and unnecessary to repeat sustainability considerations in regards to the principle of the development of this site. The SA therefore does not focus on the site being sustainable from the point of view of 'earning its place' in the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPDs. It instead focuses on appraising the sustainability of the detailed site information included in the draft SPD. Indeed the appraisal of the 'no plan' option in the SA Report assumes that the site will be developed; the no plan option is having no SPD, not no development.</p> |

(e) The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with

The LDF has a chain of conformity, which requires DPDs and SPDs to be in conformity with the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy was adopted in December 2008 and through the Examination process it was demonstrated that this DPD is sound and in conformity with national guidance and the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Site Allocations and Development Policies DPDs (2010) were also declared sound and in conformity with the Core Strategy, national guidance and the Regional Spatial Strategy. All SPDs must be in conformity with the adopted Core Strategy, Site Allocations and Development Policies DPDs. Therefore, the options that can be assessed as reasonable alternatives are very limited.

Government guidance on SAs for SPDs recognises that in most cases SAs will draw considerably from SA work undertaken for higher level plans and the need for new work may be limited. Considerable SA work as part of the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPDs has looked at the likely impacts of the North Colchester Growth Area Urban Extension compared to other options and this work is relevant.

The SA of the North Colchester Growth Area Urban Extension SPD appraised the no plan option, four options devised by stakeholders at an event in March 2009 and the option of the previous draft SPD (February 2010).

The SA concluded that without a SPD, which will set out the vision for the whole site and locations for particular uses, development may be delivered in a piecemeal fashion. If small parts of the site come forward gradually the Council may not be able to ensure that the cumulative impacts of the whole site are considered. Without the SPD it may be difficult to safeguard certain parts of the site, for example Chesterwell Wood. Producing the SPD will ensure that the site is legible and well connected both internally and externally. Importantly producing an SPD will ensure that the community can really get involved in the development process from the beginning. Finally, best practice on urban extensions advocates a Master Plan approach and it is clear that this approach will result in the most sustainable form of development.

The four options from the stakeholder workshop were useful in identifying issues of importance to the community and have been fed into the SPD. However, they lack the detail to be considered reasonable alternatives.

The SA highlighted that there is little difference between the SPD and previous consultation draft as strategically they are very similar. The main strategic difference between the options is a reduction in numbers from 2,200 dwellings in the 2010 SPD draft to 1,800 dwellings in the SPD. The reduced housing numbers in the SPD is considered to be more appropriate as it reflects current national planning policy and local opinion. The SPD will also result in more positive effects than the alternative as it puts a greater emphasis on high quality design. High quality design will not only result in

better quality buildings but will result in better transport connections, climate change adaptability, open spaces, community focal points etc.

(f) The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme

Regulation 17 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations requires the responsible authority to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Plan. Adverse effects should be identified with a view to carrying out appropriate remedial action.

An Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) is prepared by the Council every December. The AMR monitors the effects of numerous indicators, which are set out in the Core Strategy, and therefore allows the LPA to monitor the effects of the LDF.

The SA framework includes indicators for each of the SA assessment criteria and most of these indicators are included within the AMR. In order to ensure that the SA is expressly considered the AMR includes a section on the SA. This section comments on the performance of the indicators and outlines any remedial measures that will be undertaken as a response to adverse effects.