

COLCHESTER LOCAL PLAN

**FOCUSED REVIEW OF CORE
STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT
POLICIES**

**SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL
REPORT**

Spatial Policy Team

Colchester Borough Council

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Non-technical summary

Section 1. Introduction

Colchester's Local Plan Focused Review

Colchester Borough Council is using a two-stage approach to update its Local Plan. The Focused Review is the first stage, which is a limited review of policies which can be readily amended without the need to prepare further extensive evidence. Only those policies that clearly require updating due to non-compliance with the NPPF will be included in this stage. The second stage will be a Full Review, which will include amendments to the spatial strategy, housing and employment targets, and site allocations, as these issues require the support of updated evidence base work. This work is underway, and consultation on the Full Review will follow the Focused Review in 2014/5.

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is about asking at various intervals during plan preparation: “how sustainable is my plan?” A range of objectives are established and all options are assessed against these objectives to compare their environmental, economic and social effects, and ultimately to assess how sustainable an option is.

In addition to an SA, Plans must also undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC. SA examines all sustainability related effects including social, economic and environmental impacts, whereas SEA is focused primarily on environmental impacts. This report incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive into the SA process.

The SA of the Focused Review has appraised policies that have been amended and these are listed in the box below. Policies which have been subject to a minor modification, but which do not alter the thrust of the policy, have not been subject to SA.

Sustainability;

- Core Strategy Policy SD1- Sustainable Development Locations Planning Contributions/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Community Facilities;
- Core Strategy Policy SD2- Delivering facilities & Infrastructure, Centres and Employment;
- Core Strategy Policies CE1 – Centres and Employment Classification and Hierarchy;
- Core Strategy Policy CE2 – Mixed use Centres;
- Core Strategy Policy CE2b – District Centres;
- Core Strategy Policy CE2c – Local Centres, and
- Core Strategy Policy CE3 - Employment Zones
- Development Policy DP5 – Appropriate Employment Uses and Protection of Employment Land and Existing Businesses, and

- DP9 – Employment Uses in the Countryside
- Housing;
- Core Strategy Policy H2- Housing Density,
 - Core Strategy Policy H3 –Housing Diversity, and
 - Core Strategy Policy H4 – Affordable Housing,
 - New Core Strategy Policy H6- Rural Workers' Housing
- Environment;
- Core Strategy Policy ENV2- Rural Communities
 - Development Policy DP24 – Equestrian Activities
- Energy;
- Core Strategy Policy ER1 – Energy, Resources, Waste, Water and Recycling
- Design;
- Development Policy DP1- Design and Amenity

Habitat Regulations Assessment

As part of the SA Scoping Report, a Habitat Regulations Assessment screening opinion was carried out. This concluded that the Focused Review would not result in any significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites and therefore an appropriate assessment is not required.

Section 2. Methodology

This SA report has been prepared internally by the spatial policy team at CBC. The report includes the appraisal of options and likely effects of the Focussed Review. I will be published for consultation along with the pre-submission Focused Review document, for the statutory six week consultation period, on 5 August 2013. The SA objectives are listed below.

SA Objectives

- To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home.
- To ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land
- To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy
- To achieve more sustainable travel behaviour and reduce the need to travel.
- To improve the education, skills and health of the borough's population.
- To create safe and attractive public spaces
- To conserve and enhance the townscape character, historic and cultural assets of the borough.
- To conserve and enhance the natural environment, natural resources and the biodiversity of the borough.
- To make efficient use of energy and resources, and reduce waste and greenhouse emissions.

Technical difficulties

A specific difficulty encountered during the appraisal of the options, was that the differences between some of the policy options being assessed was quite minor. This is because only a slight policy adjustment was required to achieve NPPF compliance, which made it more difficult to identify significant sustainability impacts between the policy options.

Section 3. Sustainability objectives, baseline and context

This section formed the SA Scoping Report, which was issued for consultation in March-April 2013. It includes a review of relevant plans, policies and strategies; a summary of the general, social, economic and environmental characteristics of the Borough; a summary of the key sustainability issues facing the Borough; a summary of the areas experiencing the biggest change during the plan period; and a summary of the likely evolution without the Local Plan, based on existing plans, trends and practices.

Section 4. Developing the Plan Options

In this section, the report identifies the options appraised and provides a comparative summary for each. The policy options and recommendations are set out below.

SD1 – Sustainable Development Locations

Option 1 is to retain policy SD1 in its existing form

Option 2 is to retain the existing policy SD1, but with additional wording taken from the Planning Inspectorate's model sustainable development policy.

Option 3 is to retain the existing policy SD1, but with some amendments to the text to provide greater opportunities for rural developments.

Recommendation

Option 1 performs best against the sustainability objectives, with more positive impacts against objectives 3, 4 and 5, when compared against the other options.

SD2 Delivering Facilities and Infrastructure

Option 1 is to retain policy SD2 in its existing form

Option 2 is to amend policy SD2 to incorporate comments from the Environment Agency and to update the text relating to CIL and planning obligations to reflect changes in circumstances at the national and local levels.

Recommendation

There is no recommendation for this policy, resulting from the appraisal of the sustainability. Both options perform equally, meaning, in sustainability terms, both would be suitable options to be carried forward into the plan.

CE1 - Centres and Employment Classification and Hierarchy

Option 1 is to retain the existing policy CE1.

Option 2 is to revise the policy inline with the NPPF to provide greater flexibility for employment proposals.

Recommendation

Overall option 1 is more balanced than option 2 and would result in more positive effects on the environment and society. However, option 2 has been taken forward as it is inline with the NPPF and in particular paragraph 19 of the NPPF, which states that "significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system".

Policy CE2: Mixed Use Centres

Option 1 is to retain existing policy CE2 and the associated tables (CE1 & CE2).

Option 2 is to amend policy CE2 to provide greater flexibility by adding 'other accessible locations' to the centres classification and hierarchy and accepting leisure and tourism uses as a primary rather than a secondary use in employment zones.

Recommendation

On balance option 1 is a more sustainable policy option however Option 2 is the chosen plan option as it will result in more positive economic impacts by allowing retail development in highly accessible locations outside of settlements and identifying tourism and leisure uses as primary uses. It will result in potentially negative effects on landscape and biodiversity, however these could be mitigated. It is considered that Colchester's adopted planning policies set an appropriate context to ensure that any negative effects can be mitigated and it is therefore not necessary to add anything to policy option 2.

Policy CE2b: District Centres

Option 1 is to retain existing policy CE2b.

Option 2 is to amend policy CE2b to make the policy more positive and allow retail development within rural and urban district centres providing that evidence is submitted to demonstrate that the proposal will meet local needs and does not compete with the Town Centre.

Recommendation

Option 2 will result in more positive economic impacts and is more likely to result in retail and other associated development within urban and rural district centres, which will help to provide people with good access to their needs.

Policy CE2c: Local Centres

Option 1 is to retain existing policy CE2c.

Option 2 is to amend policy CE2c by removing reference to the safeguarding of local shops and services.

Recommendation

Option 1 is more sustainable than option 2 as it safeguards local shops and services; however option 2 has been included in the Focused Review as it complies with the NPPF.

Policy CE3: Employment Zones

Option 1 is retaining adopted policy CE3.

Option 2 is to amend policy CE3 by removing reference to development not suited to mixed use centres, removing retail, community and leisure uses not normally supported and inserting a paragraph stating that if there is no prospect of a site being used for employment uses applications for alternative commercial uses will be treated on their merits.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 2 is taken forward as it will result in more significant positive effects on employment.

DP5 – Appropriate Employment Uses and Protection of Employment Land and Existing Businesses

Option 1 is to retain the existing policy.

Option 2 is to delete the policy.

Option 3 is to amend the policy to make it more flexible inline with the NPPF.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 3 is taken forward. It will result in positive economic effects and continue to protect employment land, whilst being flexible and inline with the NPPF.

Policy DP9 - Employment Uses in the Countryside

Option 1 is to retain the current policy DP9.

Option 2 is the modified DP9 policy which includes new criteria for equestrian developments.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 2 is taken forward. This is because it has the potential to generate more rural jobs due to it being slightly more permissive regarding rural business proposals while at the same time highlighting the need to protect the countryside and the landscape character of rural parts of the Borough. This approach also accords with the objectives of the paragraph 28 of the NPPF in relation to supporting rural regeneration and a prosperous rural economy.

Policy H2 – Housing Density

Option 1 is the existing H2 policy which sets indicative housing densities for different locations depending on their accessibility.

Option 2 is the revised H2 Housing Density policy which does not include indicative housing densities.

Option 3 retains Table 2a however the indicative housing densities are replaced with descriptive text to link accessibility and housing density.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 2 is taken forward. Overall Option 2 is considered to be the most sustainable and flexible policy option for delivering the most appropriate housing density schemes relative to accessibility, location and need.

Policy H3 – Housing Diversity

Option 1 is the current Housing Diversity policy H3.

Option 2 is the revised policy H3.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 2 is taken forward as the preferred policy option as it is flexible and will ensure that a range of housing types can be delivered

across different locations. This will help create mixed communities and deliver a range of house that will meet the housing needs of local communities in Colchester. This approach also accords with paragraphs 47 and 50 of the NPPF.

Policy H4 – Affordable Housing

Option 1 is the current Affordable Housing policy which sets a 35% affordable housing target.

Option 2 is the revised policy which sets a 20% affordable housing target

Option 3 proposes the deletion of H4

Recommendation.

Option 2 is the preferred policy option principally because it is more likely to support the delivery of affordable housing in the Borough in both urban and rural areas without compromising the viability of future housing developments. It will also meet peoples needs for access to a range of housing at accessible locations close to key services and facilities in both urban and rural areas. Option 2 is more likely to deliver balanced developments supported with good infrastructure due the lower 20% affordable housing target. Option 2 allows for some market housing on rural exceptions sites which will could increase the delivery of affordable housing schemes in rural areas and support rural regeneration. As an approach Option 2 accords with paragraph 50 of the NPPF.

Policy H5 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Option 1 is to retain policy H5 in its existing form

Option 2 is to amend the policy to add additional text to the policy, referring to the relevant national policy documents

Recommendation

There is no recommendation for this policy, as both options perform equally in sustainability terms.

Policy H6 – Rural Workers Dwellings

Option 1 is the new Rural Workers Dwellings policy.

Option 2 is to the no policy option for this issue.

Recommendation.

It is recommended that Option 1 is taken forward as it will complies with paragraph 55 of the NPPF and ensures that rural accommodation workers needs are properly considered in Colchester's Local Plan process.

Policy ENV2 – Rural Communities

Option 1 involves the retention of the existing Core Strategy policy ENV2.

Option 2 is the amended ENV2 policy to ensure it is more inline with the NPPF regarding the treatment of Rural Exception Sites and Neighbourhood Planning.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 2 is taken forward as it is more flexible in terms of housing and employment provision in rural areas. This policy approach also accords with paragraphs 28, 54 and 183 in the NPPF regarding rural regeneration, Rural Exception Sites and Neighbourhood Planning.

Policy DP24- Equestrian Activities

Option 1 is the retention of Policy DP24.

Option 2 involves the deletion of DP24.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Policy DP24 is deleted subject to the amendment of policy DP9 to include commercial equestrian businesses and the introduction of a new Rural Workers Dwellings policy (H6). These policy changes are needed to provide a robust policy framework for assessing commercial equestrian businesses and to ensure that the needs of those employed in rural land based businesses who need to live at or close to where they work can be properly met. This approach also accords with paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

Policy ER1 – Energy, Resources, Waste and Recycling

Option 1 is retaining Core Strategy policy ER1.

Option 2 is amending the policy to ensure it is more inline with the NPPF, updates to building regulations and best practice.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 2 is taken forward as it is more inline with the NPPF, updates to building regulations and best practice and will secure more positive environmental effects.

DP1 Design and Amenity

Option 1 is to retain DP1 in its existing form

Option 2 is to add additional wording to reflect the NPPF, as a result of a representation submitted by the Environment Agency.

Recommendation

There is little difference between policy option 1 and option 2, so either option would be beneficial in sustainability terms. Option 2 performs slightly better overall, so it is recommended that, for sustainability purposes, option 2 is carried forward into the plan.

Section 5. Likely significant effects

Section 5 summarises the likely significant environmental, economic and social effects of the Focused Review, as a whole.

Environmental

A number of environmental sustainability effects were identified. Some of the key effects that will result from the chosen policy options are listed below:

- Some negative impacts on natural and historical environmental objectives, due to the policies' promotion of growth and development

- Ensuring development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land
- Ensuring that the highest density housing is delivered at the most accessible locations
- Ensuring that people have good access to key services and facilities, including sustainable transport networks
- A possible negative impact on landscape character and biodiversity and loss of Greenfield land as a result of an increase in rural exception schemes
- An increase in the number of sustainable buildings, including buildings using energy from renewable energy sources, which will help reduce carbon emissions and have a positive effect on climate change mitigation.

Economic

- Greater flexibility for employment proposals, resulting in a more positive impact on economic development and job creation across the Borough.
- Promotes the development of highly accessible land outside of centres and ensures good access to retail and associated uses in urban and rural district centres.
- Providing people with good access to employment, retail and leisure uses will reduce the need to travel.
- The vitality and viability of the Town Centre will be sustained by requiring major retail development outside of the Town Centre to provide evidence that it supports local need and does not compete with the Town Centre.
- A risk of the Town Centre being undermined, as large retail development is more likely to favour development on greenfield sites than previously developed, constrained, town centre sites.
- Potential negative impact on access to services caused by removal of reference to safeguarding local shops and services.
- Possible negative impact on development in the Town Centre as the NPPF does not recognise a difference between town centres, urban district centres, rural centres and local centres, which could result in town centre development locating to other centres.
- Potential negative effects on the supply of employment land.
- Positive impact on the rural economy and on rural regeneration due to support given to a greater mix of employment uses and the less restrictive approach to the size of businesses in the rural area.

Social

- Ensuring everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home
- Ensuring more sustainable travel is achieved by guiding developments to the most accessible locations
- Ensuring that a better mix of housing will be delivered by adopting a flexible approach based on local need and context.
- More responsive to the complexities of the housing market and community needs for housing.
- Delivering the highest density housing at the most sustainable locations; ensuring people have good access to key services and facilities including sustainable transport networks.

- Increase the delivery of affordable housing provision across the Borough without placing an excessive strain on the overall viability of future developments.
- Increasing the number of rural exception schemes coming forward, which will help address rural housing shortfalls.
- Improving the overall sustainability of some rural settlements by addressing local housing shortfalls whilst also enabling other community facilities to be delivered and contributing toward the wider regeneration of the rural Colchester.
- Meeting the need for rural workers accommodation (both permanent or temporary) as part of the overall housing mix in the Borough
- Requiring high quality, inclusive design, which will improve access to facilities, including health and community facilities, create safe and attractive public spaces and reduce crime.

Proposed mitigation and enhancement measures

To avoid economic development in inaccessible locations it was recommended that wording be added to policy CE1 about providing people with good access to their needs.

No other mitigation or enhancement measures were recommended. This is unsurprising considering that this is a Focused Review and involves amendments to existing policies, which have already been subject to SA.

Section 6. Monitoring

It is a requirement of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive and part of SAs that the significant effects of implementing a plan must be monitored to identify unforeseen effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action. Colchester Borough Council produces an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), which incorporates monitoring progress against SA objectives.

Section 1. Introduction

Colchester's Local Plan Focused Review

Colchester's strategy for maintaining an up-to-date plan entails a two-stage approach. The first stage is the initial limited review of policies which can be readily amended without the need to prepare further extensive evidence in respect of those specific policies. Only those policies that clearly require updating as they do not comply with the advice in the NPPF form part of this stage. The second stage is the Full Review, which will include amendments to the spatial strategy, housing and employment targets, and site allocations as these issues require the support of updated evidence base work. This work is now underway, and consultation on the Full Review will follow the Focused Review in 2014/5.

This is stage one, the Focused Review of the Core Strategy and Development Policies. The aim of this stage is to revise those policies that can be readily amended to be consistent with the provisions of the NPPF without the need to prepare further extensive evidence in respect of those specific policies. Revisions do not include any amendments to the spatial strategy or housing and employment targets and allocations.

Only those policies that clearly require updating as they do not comply with the advice in the NPPF form part of this stage. All other policies will remain unchanged as they will not be tested through the Examination process until they are reviewed as part of the Full Review process.

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is about asking at various intervals during plan preparation: "how sustainable is my plan?" A range of objectives are established and all options are assessed against these objectives to compare their environmental, economic and social effects and ultimately to assess how sustainable an option is.

In addition to an SA Plans must also undergo a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes. The objective of SEA 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" (SEA Directive Article 1).

There is a distinct difference between SA and SEA. SA examines all sustainability related effects including social, economic and environmental impacts, whereas SEA is focused primarily on environmental impacts. Clearly there is a high degree of overlap between these two processes and it is therefore best practice to incorporate the requirements of the SEA Directive into the SA process. Therefore all references to SA in this report also refer to and incorporate the requirements of SEA.

A SA scoping report was published for consultation alongside the Focused Review Issues and Options consultation in March-April 2013.

Purpose of SA

The SA of the Focused Review has appraised all policies that have been amended and these are listed in the box below. Those policies which have only been subject to minor modifications that do not affect the thrust of the policy, such as changes in semantics and factual updates, have not been subject to SA, as the changes will not have sustainability impacts.

Article 5.2 of the SEA Directive states that SEA must take into account the contents and level of detail of the Plan, its stage in the decision making process and the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process to avoid duplication of the assessment. SAs have been carried out for Colchester's Core Strategy, Site Allocations and Development Policies DPDs and have helped to ensure that these plans promote sustainable development and incorporate appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures. It would be unnecessary to reappraise the policies, as this would not be appropriate to the contents and level of detail of the Focussed Review and would duplicate SA work already undertaken. The correct approach is to appraise only those policies that are proposed for amendment as part of the Focussed Review, where the changes could have sustainability impacts. Furthermore, SA Monitoring as part of the Annual Monitoring Report has shown that there is no need to review any other policies.

Sustainability;

- Core Strategy Policy SD1- Sustainable Development Locations

Planning Contributions/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Community Facilities;

- Core Strategy Policy SD2- Delivering facilities & Infrastructure,

Centres and Employment;

- Core Strategy Policies CE1 – Centres and Employment Classification and Hierarchy;
- Core Strategy Policy CE2 – Mixed Use Centres;
- Core Strategy Policy CE2b – District Centres;
- Core Strategy Policy CE2c – Local Centres, and
- Core Strategy Policy CE3 - Employment Zones
- Development Policy DP5 – Appropriate Employment Uses and Protection of Employment Land and Existing Businesses, and
- DP9 – Employment Uses in the Countryside

Housing;

- Core Strategy Policy H2- Housing Density,
- Core Strategy Policy H3 –Housing Diversity,
- Core Strategy Policy H4 – Affordable Housing,
- Core Strategy Policy H5 – Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople,
- New Core Strategy Policy H6- Rural Workers' Housing

Environment;

- Core Strategy Policy ENV2- Rural Communities
- Development Policy DP24 – Equestrian Activities

Energy;

- Core Strategy Policy ER1 – Energy, Resources, Waste, Water and Recycling

Design;

- Development Policy DP1- Design and Amenity

Habitat Regulations Assessment

As part of the SA Scoping Report a Habitat Regulations Assessment screening opinion was carried out. This concluded that the Focused Review would not result in any significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites and therefore an appropriate assessment would not be required.

The screening opinion concluded that there are unlikely to be any direct effects on international sites as a result of the Focused Review. Whilst the Focused Review is not proposing a review of the housing or employment numbers it is proposing changes to policies to increase rural housing and rural employment provision (this includes policy changes regarding neighbourhood planning). Changes to rural housing and employment policies could result in a change in the size and population of some villages and indirectly increase

the number of visitors at Natura 2000 in the Borough. The survey and monitoring programme the Council commenced in 2010 will help to identify if an increase in housing and employment within the Borough is affecting Natura 2000 sites. If the evidence indicates that there is a link appropriate management measures can be implemented.

Structure of report

This SA report is structured into the following sections:

This is section 1, which introduces the Focused Review and role of SA and sets out the various stages.

Section 2 sets out the methodology for the appraisal and discusses the technical difficulties encountered during the completion of the SA.

Section 3 outlines the key messages from the review of relevant policies, plans, programmes, and sustainability objectives; the baseline situation and issues and problems facing the Borough.

Section 4 explains the options that were considered and justification is given for those options being taken forward.

Section 5 summarises the likely significant effects of the Focused Review.

Section 6 sets out the monitoring framework.

Section 2. Methodology

This Sustainability Appraisal (SA) report has been prepared internally by the spatial policy team at Colchester Borough Council.

The SA process involved developing and refining policy options for each policy proposed for amendment as part of the Focused Review. For each policy being changed at least 2 policy options were identified for assessment. The policy options identified for assessment reflected feedback received from the Issues and Options consultation.

The next stage involved a detailed appraisal of all the policy options for the Local Plan Focused Review and this was carried out using the framework of objectives set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sustainability objectives and assessment criteria

SA Objectives	Assessment Criteria	Indicators
To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will the delivery of affordable housing increase? - Will it deliver the number of houses needed to support the growing population? - Will it deliver a range of housing to meet the diverse needs of the borough? - Will it provide good quality and sustainable housing? - Will it increase rural housing exception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of affordable homes delivered - Total number of dwellings completed - Number of dwellings built to code for sustainable homes level 4 and above - Number of rural exceptions sites delivered - Number of Neighbourhood Plans adopted
To ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will it reduce the need for development on greenfield land? - Will it deliver a range of community facilities to meet community the needs - Will it reduce the risk of flooding? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - % of development on brownfield sites - % of development land on greenfield sites - Number of SUDS applications approved - Number of applications approved against EA advice
To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will it help sustain the rural economy? - Will it increase the provision of rural jobs ? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of new jobs in rural areas
To achieve more sustainable travel behaviour and reduce the need to travel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will it reduce the need to travel? - Will the levels of sustainable travel increase? - Will it improve sustainable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amount of investment in sustainable transport provision such as public transport facilities, cycleways, traffic calming

	transport infrastructure and linkages?	measures and bus shelters
To improve the education, skills and health of the borough's population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will it reduce dependence on car travel? - Will it provide equitable access to education, health, recreation and community facilities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of new community facilities delivered
To create safe and attractive public spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will attractive and public spaces be created? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amount of new public open space delivered
To conserve and enhance the townscape character, historic and cultural assets of the borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will it enhance the historic and cultural assets of the borough? - Will it enhance the character and attractiveness of the borough's settlements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Changes to the number of buildings /assets on Colchester's Local List - Changes to the number of buildings the At Risk Register
To conserve and enhance the natural environment, natural resources and the biodiversity of the borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will it enhance the landscape character of the borough? - Will it 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? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of Neighbourhood Plans approved - Number of LWS lost to development - Number of development in designated sites
To make efficient use of energy and resources, and reduce waste and greenhouse emissions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Will it reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions? - Will it increase the use of renewable energy and reduce the use of fossil fuels? - Will it help to reduce, reuse and recycle resources and minimise waste? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of buildings built to a minimum of BREEAM 'very good' or a minimum of level 4 of the code for sustainable homes - % of domestic waste recycled - % of domestic waste composted - % renewable energy schemes approved

Each policy option being assessed was scored using the system set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Scoring matrix for SA.

Score	Definition
++	Clear and substantive positive effect in response to criteria
+	Some positive effect in response to criteria
--	Clear and substantive negative effect in response to criteria
-	Some negative effect in response to criteria
+/-	Mixed effect in response to criteria
0	No effect in response to criteria
?	Effects impossible to determine from information in Strategy
n/a	Not applicable to objective

The scoring system was used to assess the social, economic and environmental sustainability of each policy option being considered for inclusion in the Focused Review. One score was awarded against each policy option and against the SA objectives and criteria. For each objective a written commentary was also included to explain the reasoning for the scores given. Consideration was also given to measures that could be introduced to mitigate any adverse effects on sustainability objectives and maximise benefits. The appraisals also included recommendations where necessary about how options could be made more sustainable.

As part of the process, the effects of the Focused Review had to be predicted and evaluated, using baseline data, to help qualify and quantify effects wherever possible.

A summary of the policy option appraisals are set out in Section 4 and the full policy appraisals are included as Appendix C.

The final SA report will be issued for consultation along with the pre-submission Focused Review document for the statutory six week consultation period commencing on 5 August 2013. The stakeholders to be consulted are set out in Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Consultation has to comply with the SCI and the requirements of the SEA Directive.

Technical difficulties

The general difficulties encountered during the preparation of the LDF and the associated SAs have relevance to the production of the SA to accompany the Focused Review of the Local Plan. These include:

- Changes to national planning guidance following the introduction of the NPPF, the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England, changes to the planning obligations system as a result of the introduction of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the introduction of Neighbourhood Planning.
- Incomplete data/evidence and quality of existing data.

Baseline information collection is an ongoing process. National planning guidance is also regularly evolving as is guidance on CIL and neighbourhood planning. As a consequence of these factors the plan making and SA processes also have to be flexible and responsive to these changes to ensure they remain up to date and in conformity. Whilst a lot of the evidence gathered to support the development of the LDF is still valid, some of it is also out of date leading to data gaps. To address this work has started on updating key pieces of evidence to ensure that the Focused Review of the Local Plan is underpinned by the most current information available. Colchester Borough Council has already commissioned or are about to commission a number of new studies which are listed below to provide a more robust evidence base for decision making-

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (October 2013);
- Draft Sports and Recreation Strategy (December 2013);
- Retail Study (April 2013);
- Affordable Housing Viability Study (April 2013); and
- CIL Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (2011).

The information contained in these reports along with the studies listed in Table 2 of the Scoping Report and other valid evidence documents were used to prepare the pre Submission Focused Review of the Local Plan for Colchester. This document will cover the period 2014/2015 and after adoption of the Focused Review of the Local Plan, work will commence on Colchester's new Local in mid 2014.

As Colchester Borough Council's resources are limited it is not appropriate to commission a study in relation to every issue. In response it has been necessary to supplement the local evidence base by research undertaken at the national, regional and county level, and interpreting this using the knowledge and expertise of local residents and professionals.

Collecting baseline data at a Borough level can be problematic. For example, in several instances environmental data is only collected at a county or regional level, which consequently limits local data analysis and impact assessment. The recent 2011 Census however has and will provide some useful up to date statistics for the Borough although it must be acknowledged that not all census data has been released yet. Care had to be taken when

interpreting Census information and help was sought from the Research and Engagement team to ensure information was being interpreted accurately.

A more specific difficulty encountered during the appraisal stages of the SA for the Focused Review of the Local Plan was that the differences between some of the policy options being assessed was quite minor. This is because the Council is currently undertaking a Focused Review at this stage to bring non compliant Local Plan policies into conformity with the NPPF. For some policies this only required a slight policy adjustment to achieve this which made it more difficult to identify what the significant sustainability impacts and differences were between the policy options assessed in this SA.

Section 3. Sustainability objectives, baseline and context

This section includes the following stages of the SA process:

- Review of relevant policies, plans and programmes that will affect the Focussed Review;
- The evidence base; and
- The sustainability issues facing Colchester.

Review of plans, policies and strategies; collecting baseline evidence; and identifying sustainability issues

A review of relevant policies, plans, programmes, strategies and initiatives has been undertaken in line with SA guidance. This has built upon and updated the substantive review undertaken to support the preparation of the Core Strategy and Development Policies DPDs. Whilst previous SAs provided a comprehensive list of documents for review as part of the SA process this context review does not duplicate previous SA work but focuses on the key issues of concern to be addressed by the Focused Review of the Local Plan.

Table 3 shows the key documents that have been used to underpin and support the development of the Focused Review of Colchester's Local Plan and the accompanying SA and this section summarises the most relevant documents. A review of the plans, policies and programmes undertaken as part of previous SA work is included in Appendix B and should be read in conjunction with this section.

Table 3 – Revised evidence studies.

International

Review of the European Sustainable Development Strategy (2009)
European Community Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (2012)
Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice (2003)

National

- National Planning Policy Framework (2012)
- Retained Planning Policy Statements-
- Planning Policy Statement 1: Planning and Climate Change (2007);
- Planning Policy Statement S 25: Development and Flood Risk Practice Guide (2009)*;
- Planning Policy Statement 25 Supplement: Development and Coastal Change Practice Guide (2010);
- Planning for Renewable Energy: A Companion Guide to PPS22 (2004).
- DECC National Energy Policy Statement EN1 (2011)
- DECC National Energy Policy Statement for Renewable Infrastructure EN3 (2011)
- DCLG: An Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning (2011)
- JNCC/Defra UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (2012)

- Securing the Future: Delivering the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005)
- Mainstreaming Sustainable Development (2011)

The documents marked with an * have been recommended for retention as part of the External Review of Government Planning Practice Guidance (the Taylor Review 2012) until new guidance is produced.

Sub-Regional

Haven Gateway: Programme of Development: A Framework for Growth, 2008 -2017 (2008)

Haven Gateway: Integrated Development Plan (2008)

County

Essex Police Authority: Three Year Strategy 2008-2011

Essex County Council: Commissioning School Places in Essex 2012/17

Essex Rural Partnership: Essex Rural Strategy 2020 - Vision for Rural Essex 2010–2015 (2010)

Essex County Council: Local Transport Strategy 2011 (2011)

Essex County Council: Integrated County Strategy

Essex County Council: Essex Economic Growth Strategy (2012)

Essex Health and Wellbeing Board (ECC): Draft Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy for Essex 2013-2016 (2012)

Essex and Southend Waste Local Plan (2001)

Essex County Council & Southend Borough Council emerging

Replacement Joint Waste Local Plan (adoption 2014)

Essex County Council: Minerals Local Plan (1997)

Essex County Council: Draft Minerals Local Plan (adoption 2014)

Essex Biodiversity Partnership: Essex Biodiversity Action Plan (2011)

Local

Strategic Housing Market Assessment (emerging 2013)

Colchester Economic Development Strategy 2010 – 2015 (2010)

Creative Colchester Strategy & Action Plan (2012)

Colchester Borough Council Strategic Plan 2012-2015 (2012)

Colchester Parks and Greenspace Strategy (2007)

PPG17 Open Space , Sport & Recreation (2008)

Draft Sports and Recreation Strategy (2013)

Safer Colchester Partnership: Strategic Assessment of Crime and Annual Partnership Plan 2012-2013 (2012)

Draft Employment Study (2013)

CBA Townscape Character Assessment (2006)

CBA Landscape Character Assessment (2006)

Colchester Borough Council Sports and Recreation Strategy (2013)

Scott Wilson Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2008)

Affordable Housing SPD (2011)

Communities Facilities SPD (updated 2012)

Better Town Centre SPD (2012)

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2011)

A summary of the documents most relevant to the Focused Review of the Local Plan is provided below.

National

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National planning guidance is set out in the NPPF which was introduced and became effective in March 2012. There is strong emphasis on positive growth and development throughout the document with a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF identifies 3 elements to sustainable development that the planning system needs to consider -

- a) **Economic sustainability** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure.
- b) **Social sustainability** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.
- c) **Environmental sustainability** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and as part of this helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

There are a number of key policy themes running through the NPPF which are summarised below-

The presumption in favour of sustainable development – promoting mixed use developments from land in urban and rural areas that deliver multiple benefits; contribute to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and a reduction in pollution; encourage the effective use of land with an emphasis on the re-use of previously developed land; conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance; actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest use of sustainable transport means (walking, cycling and public transport) and deliver sufficient facilities to improve the health, social and cultural well-being of local communities.

Building a strong competitive economy – securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity by identifying priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement, and promoting sustainable economic development to deliver homes, businesses, industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places.

Supporting a prosperous rural economy - supporting a wide range of sustainable economic growth of businesses and enterprises (agricultural diversification, land based businesses, leisure and tourism) in rural areas that

benefit local businesses in rural areas and promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages supporting community needs.

Promoting sustainable transport - supporting the preparation of strategies through joint working with neighbouring authorities to plan for and deliver a range of viable infrastructure projects, including large transport initiatives as well as schemes promoting sustainable modes of transport.

Supporting high quality communications infrastructure - supporting the expansion of electronic communications networks including telecommunications and high speed broadband.

Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes – meet the local needs for market and affordable housing through the identification of a 5, 10 and 15 year supply of developable sites or broad locations for growth. LPAs should plan for the delivery of a range of housing of mixed size, type, and tenure based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community. LPAs should also work with neighbouring authorities through the duty to cooperate to plan for the delivery of housing, particularly affordable housing, through the identification of rural exception sites based on local circumstances and local need.

Requiring good design - plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design in all developments that respond to local character and history, establish a strong sense of place and help create streetscapes which are safe, attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.

Promoting healthy communities - plan positively for the provision and use of shared space, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments that are safe, attractive and sustainable. LPAs should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services.

Meeting the challenges of climate change - LPAs should prepare a positive strategy to promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources, adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, taking full account of flood risk, coastal change, and water supply and demand considerations. New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment – Local Development Documents should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment; protect and enhance valued landscapes (e.g. AONBs), geological conservation interests and soils; and minimise impacts on biodiversity through the conservation, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and green infrastructure networks. Plans should encourage the effective use of land by re-using previously developed land where appropriate and minimise pollution, noise and other significant adverse impacts on health, quality of life and the environment arising as a result of new development.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment – LPAs should plan positively for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment including designated and non-designated heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats.

Sub-Regional

Haven Gateway Framework for Growth: Programme of Development

Colchester forms part of the Haven Gateway sub-region, which is a recognised Growth Area. The framework for growth outlines how this special status will help deliver critical funding for vital infrastructure and development projects up to 2017 through a long-term partnership between CBC, the Haven Gateway Partnership and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

Local Transport Strategy: Local Transport Plan for Essex 2011

The Local Transport Plan for Essex, produced by Essex County Council sets out a vision to deliver a transport system that supports sustainable economic growth and helps deliver the best quality of life for the residents of Essex over the next 15 years. The Plan sets out 5 key objectives to help achieve this -

- Provide connectivity for Essex communities and international gateways to support sustainable economic growth and regeneration.
- Reduce carbon dioxide emissions and improve air quality through lifestyle changes, innovation and technology.
- Improve safety on the transport network and enhance and promote a safe travelling environment.
- Secure and maintain all transport assets to an appropriate standard and ensure that the network is available for use.
- Provide sustainable access and travel choice for Essex residents to help create sustainable communities.

The Plan sets out a numbers of investment priorities for Essex including within the Haven Gateway and Colchester and identifies wide reaching schemes to improve the transport network for the whole of Essex.

County

Essex Rural Strategy 2020: Vision for Rural Essex 2010 – 2015

The Essex Rural Strategy has the following six key strategic themes:

- active and caring communities;
- improved access to services;
- greater availability of affordable housing;
- a thriving economy;
- a rich and varied environment;
- a responsive planning and policy framework.

To address affordable housing shortages in rural areas the strategy aims to encourage all levels of local authority (parish, district and county) to play a proactive role in identifying evidence of need and appropriate sites for rural

affordable housing; to adopt a positive approach regarding planning applications for need-led affordable rural housing; and to secure the provision of affordable housing in rural communities of over 3,000 people with a percentage of these provided for local people.

To deliver a thriving rural economy the strategy expects planning authorities to set clear policies for rural regeneration in their Local Development Documents setting out the most appropriate type and size of business for their areas thereby allowing appropriate new business and diversification projects to go ahead.

Local

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (2011) - CIL is a new levy that local authorities can choose to charge on developments in their area. The levy is intended to provide infrastructure to support the development of an area and can supplement other public sector funding streams to ensure that new community infrastructure (such as schools) can be provided to keep pace with population growth. The system is intended to be very simple in that it applies to most new buildings and charges are based on the size and type of the new development. CIL will be set locally and will become a standard charge per square metre of development floor space. CIL will replace 'section 106' contributions for general types of community infrastructure, however 'section 106' will still be used for site specific measures that are required to make a development acceptable (such as open space) as well as for affordable housing provision.

CIL is to be paid according to a charging schedule prepared by the charging authority (in this case CBC) and once implemented CIL will provide a mechanism to help deliver facilities as part of sustainable developments in the area in the future.

Evidence Base

As part of the SA process it is necessary to collect relevant social, economic and environmental data in order to identify the key characteristics of the Borough.

General characteristics of Colchester

Data from the 2011 Census put the Borough population at approximately 173,100 with a density of 5.3 people per hectare. The predominant ethnic group is White British with 87.5% of the population describing themselves as such. The ethnic minority population was 12.5% which in terms of numbers equates to a population of approximately 21,500 people.

The whole population of Colchester is expected to grow 15.7% (from 2011 Census numbers) to just over 200,000 by 2021. Recent decades have seen a trend towards an ageing population in Colchester and this will continue, albeit modestly, into the next decade. Currently in 2013 it is estimated that the over

60s account for 22.3% of the population and this is due to increase to 23.4% by 2021. Under fives will account for a very similar proportion of the population in 2021 at 7.4% compared to 7.5% in 2013.

According to the 2011 Census there were just over 71,600 households in Colchester. Of these, 66.3% were privately owned; 13.5% socially rented; 18.7% privately rented; 0.5% in shared ownership; and 1.0% living rent-free. Average household size was 2.3 people in 2011.

1,012 homes were built between April 2011 and March 2012 including 334 flats and 678 houses. Affordable housing accounted for 366 of the total units with 271 socially rented; 61 shared ownership; and 33 units built through the HomeBuy Direct scheme (which offers equity loans towards the purchase of a new build home on selected developments). Of these developments 88.0% were built on brownfield sites and 12.0% on greenfield sites.

Based on sales, Colchester's average house price in January 2013 was £216,840. Figures published in December 2012 indicated a semi-detached property sold on average for £195,328 and a flat/maisonette sold on average for £112,612.

Economic characteristics of Colchester

Colchester is connected to a comprehensive network of major roads via the A12 and A120, which provide routes to London, the M25, Harlow and Cambridge. The Borough also lies in close proximity to the major seaport of Harwich (20 miles) and Stansted airport (30 miles). This strategic position has meant the area has been a magnet for growth resulting in a healthy and vibrant economy.

Transportation provision in the Borough includes six railway stations; bus routes operated by ten bus companies; and several cycle trails. One of the biggest challenges to Colchester's future development is traffic growth and the dominance of the car as the main mode of travel. The 2011 Census indicated that 79.4% of households own one or more cars or vans with over 12,000 more cars in the area since 2001.

Using data from the 2011 Census, figures show the largest proportion of Colchester residents (22.6%), occupied lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations, 14.2% were employed in semi-routine occupations, and 13.5% were employed in intermediate occupations.

The industry class employing the most people in Colchester according to the 2011 Census was the "wholesale and retail, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles" class which accounted for 16.0% of jobs. The next three largest industry classes were "human health and social work" which accounted for 13.5% of employment, followed by: "education" at 11.4%; and "construction" at 8.3%. The largest employers in Colchester by approximate number of employees are Colchester District General Hospital with 3,000; University of Essex with 2,000; Colchester Borough Council with 1,500; and Colchester

Institute with 900. The largest private sector employer is Mothkind Clean Ltd, an industrial cleaning company, which employs approximately 800 people.

Colchester has approximately 435,000m² of retail floorspace; 208,000m² of office floorspace; 644,000m² of industrial floorspace; and 110,000m² classed as 'other' floorspace. In order to fulfil Core Strategy 2021 targets, the Borough will need to provide a further 48,259 sqm of retail floorspace in the town centre.

Approximately 77% of the population aged 16-64 was economically active in Colchester in 2012. Model based unemployment figures for the Borough showed Colchester's unemployment rate was 7.1% (which was above the 6.9% figure for the East). This percentage is based on a proportion of the borough's economically active population.

On the average rank measure of deprivation, Colchester ranked 206 out of 326 authorities, placing it in the 40% least deprived in England, as was also the case in 2007 (rank 1 being the most deprived). Although median annual earnings are lower than those in Essex and the East of England (in Colchester median earnings were £27,106 in 2012, compared to £29,510 in Essex overall), there are variations in prosperity and there are pockets of deprivation in parts of both the towns and rural areas.

Tourism plays an important part in the local economy. Tourism was worth £231.6m, to the borough economy in 2011, which is a rise of approximately 3% from £224.8m in 2010, and 267% from 1993. In total, it is estimated that 4,071 full time equivalent jobs are supported by tourism, equating to 5,529 actual jobs. 1,799 actual jobs are supported by staying visitors and 3,729 by day trips.

Colchester attracted just under 5.0m visitor trips in 2011. This is approximately 6% higher than in 2010 (4.7m) and 79% higher than the 1993 figure of 2.8m visitor trips. This can be broken down as follows:

- 64,000 staying trips taken by overseas staying visitors;
- 222,000 staying trips taken by domestic staying visitors; and
- 4.7m day trippers.

The Borough is carrying out an ambitious regeneration programme in four areas of Colchester; North Colchester, the Garrison, St. Botolph's and East Colchester. The redevelopments will collectively provide new housing, employment, a university research park and community facilities. A number of new facilities have already been delivered as part of regeneration proposals including a new army garrison to the south east of Colchester; Firstsite, a major new visual arts facility; and the new football community stadium.

Social characteristics of Colchester

In 2007, none of the small areas in Colchester appeared in the top 10% most deprived in England. However, in the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation two small areas were in the top 10% most deprived in England. These were Magnolia in St Andrew's ward and St Anne's Estate in St Anne's ward.

In relation to other Essex districts, Colchester as a whole had decreased in relative deprivation for average score, average rank and local concentration measures. The average rank and score measure place Colchester among the 40% least deprived districts in England.

In both 2007 and 2010 income domain, there were 28 small areas in Colchester which fell into the top 40% most deprived nationally. In both years, St Anne's Estate in St Anne's ward was the only small area ranked in the top 10% most income deprived nationally.

Life expectancy in the Borough has been estimated as nearly 80 years for men and over 83 years for women. There are two hospitals, 32 doctors and 27 dental surgeries within the borough. In addition, there are three clinics, 16 opticians and 28 pharmacies.

There are 79 maintained schools: 64 primaries, 11 secondary's and four special schools. There are two higher education colleges, Colchester Sixth Form College and the Colchester Institute, plus the University of Essex, making the Borough a major educational base with visiting students significantly adding to the diversity of the population. The provision of day care, nursery education and out-of-school care remains an issue for the borough, with there being more demand than formal supply.

Educational achievement is generally good. In 2011, 16.7% of Colchester's working population aged 16 and over were qualified to level 2 standard, and 27.2% to level 4+ standard. Level 2 qualifications cover: five or more 'O' level passes; five or more CSE (grade 1s); five or more GCSEs (grades A-C); School Certificate; one or more 'A' levels/'AS' levels; NVQ level 2; or Intermediate GNVQ. Level 4 or more qualifications cover: First Degree, Higher Degree, NVQ levels 4 and 5; HNC; HND; Qualified Teacher Status; Qualified Medical Doctor; Qualified Dentist; Qualified Nurse; Midwife; or Health Visitor, or higher. Level 2 attainment was below the Essex average of 17.2%, however level 4+ attainment was higher than the Essex average of 23.0%.

The community has access to a wide range of council-run services and facilities, including those owned by the 31 parish councils in the borough. Facilities include country parks at Cudmore Grove in East Mersea and Highwoods in Colchester, a leisure centre including swimming pools and four multi-activity centres. A 10,000 seat capacity football stadium opened in north Colchester in 2008.

Environmental characteristics

Colchester has a rich and diverse heritage. As Camulodonum, it was the first capital of England and it is also Britain's oldest recorded town; recorded by Pliny the Elder in AD77. The Borough has a rich archaeological and cultural heritage, dating back to at least 4000BC.

The area boasts 22 conservation areas, some 2,560 listed buildings and 52 Scheduled Monuments. Additionally there are four parks within Colchester on the National Register of Special Historic Interest including Castle Park, Severalls Hospital, Layer Marney Tower gardens and Wivenhoe Park. CBC has also recently updated its Local List which includes 741 buildings or assets that are of historical or architectural interest.

The rural landscape of the Borough has a rich ecological character influenced by geology and landform. Habitats include woodland, grassland, heath, estuary, saltmarsh, mudflat and freshwater as well as open water habitats. Many sites are recognised for their value by international and national designations, including the coastal and estuary areas in the south east and the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the north of the Borough.

Colchester has a rich biodiversity with many sites designated for their nature conservation interest. Much of the coastline is designated under international and European designations including the Mid-Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation, the Mid-Essex Special Protection Area, The Blackwater Estuary Special Protection Area and Abberton Reservoir Special Protection Area. The Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated under the Habitats Directive and Birds Directive respectively. Some are also Ramsar sites designated under international conventions e.g. the Ramsar Convention. There are also ten Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) designated in Colchester. These are nationally important ecological/geological sites designated under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 with further protection provided through the Countryside & Rights of Ways Act 2000.

Following a review in 2008, 168 Local Wildlife sites have been designated in the borough along with ten local nature reserves. These are non-statutory nature conservation sites which along with the statutory sites play a key role in helping conserve the borough's biodiversity.

Whilst the Borough of Colchester is extensively rural, the majority of the population live in the towns and villages. As a result, it is the built up areas which figure most prominently in many people's lives and the appearance and quality of their urban surroundings is an important factor in their quality of life.

There are four Air Quality Management Areas in Colchester, located in the following areas:

Area 1 - Central Corridors (including High Street Colchester; Head Street; North Hill; Queen Street; St. Botolph's Street; St. Botolph's Circus; Osborne Street; Magdalen Street; Military Road; Mersea Road; Brook Street; and East Street).

Area 2 - East Street and the adjoining lower end of Ipswich Road.

Area 3 - Harwich Road/St Andrew's Avenue junction.

Area 4 - Lucy Lane North, Stanway; Mersea Road; and Brook Street.

In 2011/12 40.2% of all household waste collected was recycled, reused or composted. This exceeds the annual target of 40% and but lower than last year's figure of 40.24%. During this time a total of 23,757 tonnes of waste within the Borough was recycled, reused or composted.

The average residual waste per household was 467.9kg in 2011/12, which is slightly lower than last years figure of 479.1kg. The reduction in average waste per household is thought to be a result of the economic climate forcing a reduction in food thrown away, increased waste awareness through education and a reduction in food packaging produced by the industry.

During 2011/12 CBC's Annual Monitoring Report reported that no planning applications had been approved contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency.

In 2004, the average domestic consumption of gas stood at 20,336 kWh; by 2011 this had decreased 16,500 kWh. In contrast average domestic consumption of electricity which was recorded at 3,300 kWh remained unchanged in 2011.

Colchester's potable drinking water comes from Ardleigh Reservoir. National daily domestic water use (per capita consumption) according to the WWF is 150 litres. Nationally we are expected to reduce per capita consumption of water to an average of 130 litres per person per day by 2030. Amendments to building regulations in 2010 require per capita consumption of water to be limited to 125 litres, this combined with the Code for Sustainable Homes will help to improve water efficiency in new dwellings

Colchester is committed to delivering more sustainable buildings in accordance with the Local Plan and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD. It is also committed to reducing Climate Change both within the Borough and through its in-house operations. The Council signed up to the Local Authority Carbon Management Scheme (LACM) in 2007 and with guidance from the Carbon Trust have seen substantial energy savings in our day-to-day operations. Between April 2011 and March 2012 there was a reduction in CO₂ emissions from CBC operations and buildings of 6%, which is just under 540 tonnes of CO₂. Per capita CO₂ emissions have reduced by a total of 16.2% between the baseline of 2005 and 2010. Per capita emissions for Colchester residents are now 5.7 tonnes having fallen from a baseline of 6.8 tonnes per capita.

Key Sustainability Issues

As part of the SA process it is necessary to identify the key sustainability issues facing the area that the Focused Review will have to address. These issues have been identified through the collection and analysis of the baseline data, evidence and consultation with stakeholders.

General issues

Matching population growth with housing provision, particularly affordable housing, in both urban and rural areas, remains an important issue for the borough.

As the population of the Borough continues to grow, demand for access to key services and facilities such as health services, education and public transport is likely to increase. It could also increase demand for other key services such as local economy, retail, leisure and tourism. It is likely that many of these impacts can be positive if planned for and managed correctly. The main urban areas of Colchester are likely to remain the focus for the delivery of the majority of key facilities, services and activities. There are five major regeneration sites in the Borough, each of which should provide new opportunities to deliver housing, employment, key services and new community facilities at the most sustainable locations. The focused review of the Local Plan will therefore have to provide the appropriate planning policy framework to continue to promote the delivery of essential infrastructure (affordable housing, transport, flood defence, education, open space etc) through the effective implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Social issues

The provision of housing, particularly affordable housing in both urban and rural areas, remains a major issue for Colchester. Meeting the demand for affordable housing is a challenge considering the large discrepancy between average house prices and average wages as well as the current difficulties obtaining mortgages without a sizeable deposit. The issue could also be compounded once CIL becomes effective because if it is not carefully managed it could impact on the viability of delivering affordable housing as well as other key infrastructure needed to ensure that new development is sustainable and meets community needs.

Rural housing provision could be enhanced through the production of neighbourhood plans. Boxted Parish Council, West Bergholt Parish Council and Myland Community Council and Wivenhoe Town Council are currently preparing neighbourhood plans for their respective parish areas. An interest has been expressed by several other parish councils to produce a neighbourhood plan in the near future. If adopted these could help deliver rural housing and rural employment opportunities and also any community facilities needed to address local needs.

For a number of reasons access to a variety of services and facilities can be an issue for Colchester's residents. The Index of Multiple Deprivation measures social inclusion by considering and scoring a whole range of issues, from access to certain facilities, to income and employment. The score provides an indication of how deprived an area is. On a national level Colchester Borough scores low however it will remain important to continue to encourage social inclusion through the design and build of new communities and to ensure adequate community infrastructure and services are available.

There is a large rural hinterland beyond the main settlements of Colchester, Tiptree, West Mersea, Wivenhoe and Rowhedge and rural isolation can be an issue. Rural areas often have limited facilities, and this coupled with poor public transport links can prevent those without access to a car accessing the facilities they need. It is important for villages to retain a sense of community and to avoid the creation of 'commuter villages'.

In promoting healthy lifestyles access to recreation, leisure and open space is as important as access to formal health facilities like hospitals, doctors and dentists. As population projections indicate an aging population, pressure on health and social care services, particularly the need for residential nursing care is likely to increase. It will also impact upon other sectors of the borough such as the local economy, the increased housing demand and an increase on public transport and other key services. A general increase in population figures will also impact upon the current number of schools and other educational establishments required.

Economic issues

As the current economy of the Borough is generally good and unemployment is low, the key sustainability issues for the economy are maintaining a healthy, vibrant and diverse economy into the future.

Considering the fact that a significant part of the Borough is rural, reviving the rural economy which has been affected in recent years by falling incomes from farming will be an important issue for the Focused Review of the Local Plan to consider. Improving access in rural areas to jobs and services will significantly contribute to this aim. Improved access to the internet through the provision of better cable and broadband networks will become increasingly important for rural business and rural communities in general.

Environmental issues

Climate Change remains a key issue for the Focused Review of the Local Plan to address. It is predicted that through climate change the summers in England will become longer, drier and hotter whilst the winters will be stormier and wetter. This could have adverse impacts not only on the environment, but also on economic and social aspects of life in Colchester.

The Focused Review will have to encourage planning that reduces the emissions of greenhouse gases and considers how to plan for dealing with the effects of climate change, for example by managing increased flooding incidents through the promotion of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and managing increased summer droughts through the promotion of water efficiency techniques. New development will also need to consistently achieve best practice in sustainable construction and design. The development of renewable sources of energy will also need to be encouraged throughout development, local businesses and local communities. In a similar vein the amount of waste produced in Colchester is increasing and at the same time the land available to dispose of this waste (landfill sites) is reducing.

Given the potential for additional rural housing and employment growth to be delivered a key consideration will be the protection and conservation of important nature conservation areas and open coast and countryside along with strategic green gaps between settlements.

The natural environment of the Borough has been shaped by land management and as a result there is a variety of good quality landscapes and habitats, supporting a diverse range of species including internationally significant areas of salt marsh, oyster fishery and coastline all of which are within the Special Area of Conservation (SAC). New development has the potential to lead to the loss of habitat and species so this must be prevented where possible and mitigated in all other circumstances. Colchester Borough Council's Focused Review of the Local Plan should promote the reuse of land (i.e. development on brownfield sites) where possible to make the most efficient use of land. However brownfield land is a dwindling resource and pressure to develop on greenfield sites will probably increase. It should be noted that some brownfield sites have a high conservation value and provide important refuge for some species therefore it will be important to assess their biodiversity value if they are considered for redevelopment.

Maintaining and enhancing the natural and built environment of the borough (including the historic and built heritage) are very important to the residents and communities of Colchester. All future developments will need to take account of cultural and heritage assets and continue to protect and enhance them wherever possible.

Areas experiencing change during the plan period

Colchester's town centre and regeneration areas are expected to change the most during the plan period. The Focused Review will direct development towards the most accessible and sustainable locations, and plans for the provision of transport, employment and community facilities to support the following growth areas-

Town Centre – this area will be the focus of regeneration activity to deliver 2000 new homes, 67,000sqm of retail floorspace and 40,000sqm of office floorspace. The regeneration of St Botolph's will deliver a new cultural quarter using the recently opened First Site as a catalyst to stimulate further growth. Furthermore the creation of the North Station gateway will improve access to Colchester town centre.

North Growth Area – this area will accommodate 6,200 homes, including a sustainable urban extension and the regeneration of the former Severalls Hospital. The community stadium has already been delivered as well as the new A12 junction whilst the northern Approach Road, park and ride and transit corridor are likely to be delivered within the period covered by this focused review.

East Growth Area – this area will regenerate the former harbour to accommodate 2,600 new homes, 36,000sqm of new office space, the east transit corridor as well as a new hotel. The regeneration of this part of Colchester is well under way through the delivery of a university research

park, the expansion of the university itself and improvements at Hythe rail station.

South Growth Area – this area has already seen the construction of a new army garrison with plans to regenerate the former garrison through the delivery of 3,000 homes within an urban village complete with good links to the town centre.

Stanway Growth Area – this area will be subject to significant development, including the delivery of 1,800 homes, employment development (36,500sqm of office and industrial floorspace) and the south-west distributor road which is scheduled to open in the spring of 2014.

Tiptree, Wivenhoe and West Mersea – these are the main district settlements outside of Colchester town. They will accommodate about 1,600 homes and provide shops and services to their surrounding rural hinterland. The distinct local character of other villages will be protected by the focused review and local housing and employment development will be supported to meet community needs.

Rural Areas - under the current Core Strategy small rural villages are only expected to deliver 435 (2%) out of the borough's 19,100 full housing allocation by 2023. Policy changes being proposed through the focused review of the Local Plan and through the introduction of neighbourhood plans may increase the number of houses and employment opportunities delivered in rural areas.

Likely evolution without the Local Plan

Baseline assessment included an evaluation of how current policies, practices and trends might change in the future in the absence of any active intervention through the Focused Review of the Local Plan.

Failure to review and update the Core Strategy and Development Policies documents would mean that Colchester Borough Council's current planning documents are not fully in accordance with the NPPF. Whilst this is not an immediate issue, failure to bring the two sets of planning documents into conformity would leave the Borough open to the risk of planning by appeal. The lack of an up to date Local Plan could also lead to unsustainable sporadic development in areas not earmarked or suitable for growth, undermining the Council's ability to deliver growth at the most sustainable locations.

A failure to review and update the Local Plan could potentially result in insufficient housing and employment opportunities being delivered. It is important that the Local Plan is reviewed to reflect the introduction of the CIL and Neighbourhood Planning. By not updating the Local Plan to reflect CIL requirements, there is a risk that new developments will not be supported by the necessary infrastructure and therefore not be sustainable. Failure to plan for development and change beyond the scope of the existing Local Plan would have implications in the following policy areas-

- **Provision of key infrastructure, sustainable community facilities infrastructure and accessible services** - CIL studies have demonstrated the high cost of providing comprehensive infrastructure.

Without updating policies to incorporate changes about planning obligations and the introduction of CIL would mean that Colchester Borough Council's would be unable to secure financial contributions from new development for infrastructure and community facilities to ensure that development are sustainable and meet community needs.

- **Housing affordability** - delivery of affordable housing is increasing year on year in Colchester. In 2011 and 2012 the overall percentage of affordable housing completions was 35.3% of all units meaning that the 35% affordable target for housing was delivered. This is unusual and it is expected that the achievement of the 35% affordable housing target in the future is likely to be constrained by the fact that the increased rental income stream resulting from the new affordable rent tenure is seen by government as a replacement for grant. It will also be compounded by the fact that they are on sites where particular site viability issues have led to a reduction in the target. The implementation of CIL could also potentially affect the Colchester Borough Council's ability to reach the 35% affordable housing target once it is adopted and operational.
- **Rural employment** - in the absence of positive planning policies to support rural employment initiatives and farm diversification, economic decline and continuing rural deprivation could be expected to continue.

Section 4. Developing the Plan Options

This section of the report outlines the options that were appraised and provides a summary of the comparative effects. In the majority of cases the option that is clearly the most sustainable has been included in the Focussed Review. However, there are a few examples of where an alternative option is more sustainable but the preferred option has been taken forward as it complies with the NPPF. The purpose of the Focussed Review is to ensure that Colchester's planning policies conform to the NPPF and there is no conflict. The SA is a tool to aid decision making and has shown that overall the Focussed Review will have many positive effects, which are outlined in section 5 of this report.

Sustainability

SD1 – Sustainable Development Locations

Options

Option 1 is to retain policy SD1 in its existing form

Option 2 is to retain the existing policy SD1, but with additional wording taken from the Planning Inspectorate's model sustainable development policy.

Option 3 is to retain the existing policy SD1, but with some amendments to the text to provide greater opportunities for rural developments.

Comparative effects

Overall, the policy options all perform very similarly and generally perform well against all of the sustainability objectives. With the promotion of sustainable development in the order of 19,000 homes and 14,200 jobs to the most sustainable and accessible locations over the period 2001 to 2023, the policy options will lead to a range of sustainability benefits, primarily social and economic. In particular, the policy options will lead to the development of a significant number of homes towards ensuring everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home; a significant number of jobs to contribute towards a prosperous economy, ensuring that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land; and contributing to the achievement of more sustainable travel by guiding developments to the most accessible locations.

The fact that the policy options all promote growth and development means that there will inevitably be some negative impacts on natural and historical environmental objectives. However, new development also provides the opportunity to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment.

The support for rural growth undermines the sustainability of option 3, making it the least sustainable option and the emphasis on working with applicants to

secure approval of planning applications weakens the sustainability of option 2.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Option 1 is taken forward as the preferred policy. Option 1 performs best against the sustainability objectives, with more positive impacts against objectives 3, 4 and 8 when compared against the other options.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Option 2		✓							✓
Option 3	✓								

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

Planning Contributions/ Community Infrastructure Levy and Community Facilities

SD2 Delivering Facilities and Infrastructure

Options

Option 1 is to retain policy SD2 in its existing form

Option 2 is to amend policy SD2 to incorporate comments from the Environment Agency and to update the text relating to CIL and planning obligations to reflect changes in circumstances at the national and local levels.

Comparative effects

Overall it is considered that there are not any significant sustainability differences between these two policy options; both options have scored equally for each criterion. The objectives against which the policy options have the strongest sustainability benefits are achieving a prosperous and sustainable economy and improving the vitality of town centres; improving the education, skills and health of the Borough's population; achieving more sustainable travel behaviour and reducing the need to travel; and creating safe and attractive public spaces and reduce crime.

Recommendation

There is no recommendation for this policy, resulting from the appraisal of the sustainability. Both options perform equally, meaning, in sustainability terms, both would be suitable options to be carried forward into the plan.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Option 2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

Centres and Employment

CE1 - Centres and Employment Classification and Hierarchy

Options

Option 1 is to retain the existing policy CE1.

Option 2 is to revise the policy inline with the NPPF to provide greater flexibility for employment proposals.

Comparative Effects

Option 1 will encourage regeneration and intensification of existing centres and limit development of unallocated land. The Town Centre and its fringe are the most accessible locations in the Borough and accommodating more development at these locations will improve accessibility. This option gives priority to new uses in the Town Centre, which will contribute to its vitality and viability.

Option 2 provides greater flexibility for employment proposals, and will result in a more positive impact on economic development and job creation across the Borough. However, this greater flexibility may lead to development of greenfield land, particularly as option 2 recognises that small schemes may be appropriate in rural and countryside locations. To avoid economic development in inaccessible locations it is recommended that wording be added about providing people with good access to their needs. Option 2 would remove reference to safeguarding local shops and services, which could have a negative impact on access to services. Option 2 may impact on development in the Town Centre as the NPPF does not recognise a difference between town centres, urban district centres, rural centres and local centres, which could result in town centre development locating to other centres. However, this option does recognise that the Town Centre should continue to be the preferred location for town centre uses.

Recommendation

Overall option 1 is more balanced than option 2 and would result in more positive effects on the environment and society. However, it is recommended that Option 2 is taken forward as the preferred policy as it is inline with the NPPF, in particular paragraph 19, which states that “significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system”.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Option 2	✓		✓		✓	✓			

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

Policy CE2: Mixed Use Centres

Options

Option 1 is to retain existing policy CE2 and the associated tables (CE1 & CE2).

Option 2 is to amend policy CE2 to provide greater flexibility by adding 'other accessible locations' to the centres classification and hierarchy and accepting leisure and tourism uses as a primary rather than a secondary use in employment zones.

Comparative effects

Both options will provide a good range of shops and services and promote the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. New economic opportunities in the Town Centre are more accessible to a wider range of potential employees, customers and visitors and promote sustainable travel. Option 2 will result in a more positive impact on employment development by promoting the development of highly accessible land outside of centres. However, this option could undermine the Town Centre as large retail development is more likely to favour development on greenfield sites than previously developed, constrained town centre sites. Development of greenfield land will affect the landscape context of settlements and biodiversity. Option 2 does recognise that the Town Centre continues to be the preferred location for town centre uses. Both options promote the incorporation of community facilities in mixed use centres, which are accessible locations. Option 2 is more positive as leisure and tourism uses are recognised as a primary use.

Recommendation

On balance option 1 is a more sustainable policy option. However, Option 2 is the chosen plan option, which will result in more positive economic impacts by allowing retail development in highly accessible locations outside of settlements and identifying tourism and leisure uses as primary uses. It will result in potentially negative effects on landscape and biodiversity, however these could be mitigated. It is considered that Colchester's adopted planning policies set an appropriate context to ensure that any negative effects can be mitigated and it is therefore not necessary to add anything to policy option 2.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1		✓	✓				✓		
Option 2					✓				

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

Policy CE2b: District Centres

Options

Option 1 is to retain existing policy CE2b.

Option 2 is to amend policy CE2b to make the policy more positive and allow retail development within rural and urban district centres providing that evidence is submitted to demonstrate that the proposal will meet local needs and not compete with the Town Centre.

Comparative effects

Both options will help to provide people with good access to retail and associated uses in urban and rural district centres. Option 2 is a more positive and flexible policy option and so it is likely to result in more positive impacts on economic development and provision of facilities than option 1. Both options will support the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. Option 1 does not allow development that would undermine the Town Centre and option 2 requires development above a certain size to include supporting evidence that it meets local needs and does not compete with the Town Centre.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Option 2 is taken forward as the preferred policy. Option 2 will result in more positive economic impacts and is more likely to result in retail and other associated development within urban and rural district centres, which will help to provide people with good access to their needs.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1						✓			
Option 2		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

Policy CE2c: Local Centres

Options

Option 1 is to retain existing policy CE2c.

Option 2 is to amend policy CE2c by removing reference to the safeguarding of local shops and services.

Comparative effects

Both options will improve the delivery of employment uses and help to provide people with good access to retail and associated uses in neighbourhood

centres. Option 1 is more positive as it safeguards local shops and services. Removing reference to safeguarding could make it more likely that local shops, out of centres, are lost to alternative uses.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1		✓	✓	✓	✓				
Option 2									

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

Policy CE3: Employment Zones

Options

Option 1 is to retain adopted policy CE3.

Option 2 is to amend policy CE3 by removing reference to development not suited to mixed use centres, removing retail, community and leisure uses not normally supported and inserting a paragraph stating that if there is no prospect of a site being used for employment uses applications for alternative commercial uses will be treated on their merits.

Comparative effects

Both options will improve the delivery of employment by supporting employment development in accessible locations around the Borough. Locating developments in accessible locations will reduce the need to travel. Both options will encourage regeneration and intensification of existing areas and limit development of unallocated land.

Option 1 only gives support to small scale retail, community and leisure developments. It also precludes development not suited to mixed use centres.

Option 2 will result in a greater range of retail, services and facilities as it supports, in principle, retail, community and leisure developments within employment zones. Under this option alternative commercial uses would be permitted where there is no prospect of a site being used for employment uses. This option will therefore have more significant positive effects on employment than option 1 providing that it supports alternative commercial uses. Option 2 will also have a more positive impact on reducing the need to travel as it will allow a more diverse range of uses to be delivered on employment sites.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Option 2 is taken forward as the preferred policy as it will result in significant positive effects for delivering employment in the Borough.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1		✓							
Option 2		✓	✓	✓	✓				

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

DP5 – Appropriate Employment Uses and Protection of Employment Land and Existing Businesses

Options

Option 1 is to retain the existing DP5 policy.

Option 2 is to delete policy DP5.

Option 3 is to amend the policy DP5 to make it more flexible inline with the NPPF.

Comparative effects

Option 1 will ensure that employment land is retained unless there are exceptional circumstances to justify the loss, ensuring that employment land remains in accessible locations. Under Options 2 and 3 if it can be demonstrated that there is little prospect of employment use coming forward on a site alternative uses will be considered acceptable subject to compliance with other planning policies. Options 1 and 3 will have a more positive impact as under option 2 it is more likely that employment land could be lost to alternative uses, without the safeguards from local policy requiring loss of employment land to be supported by evidence of lack of demand.

All options will have a positive impact on the rural economy. Options 2 and 3 will have a more positive impact than Option 1 as Option 1 makes it clear that some uses will not be acceptable in rural areas. Under Options 2 and 3 a greater mix of employment uses is likely to come forward in rural areas.

Under Option 2, the no plan scenario, employment land is likely to be lost to more profitable land uses, which will fail to achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy. The loss of employment land will result in significant harm to the local economy and the loss of sites within existing communities will result in workers having to travel further for work.

Under Options 1 and 3, if an employment site is re-developed for a non employment use, planning contributions may be required towards employee training schemes, which will improve access to education.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 3 is taken forward as the preferred policy. It will result in positive economic effects and continue to protect employment land, whilst also being flexible and in accordance with the NPPF.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1		✓					✓		✓
Option 2		✓							
Option 3		✓	✓		✓				✓

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

Policy DP9 - Employment Uses in the Countryside

Option 1 is to retain the current policy DP9.

Option 2 is the amended policy DP9 which includes the addition of new criteria for equestrian developments and adds flexibility about employment uses in the countryside.

Comparative effects

Option 1 will not regenerate rural areas as effectively as Option 2 as it only supports small scale rural businesses. While this could help protect settlement character and landscape character overall it could have a negative effect on the number of new jobs created in rural parts of the Borough. It will be less effective generally at delivering jobs close to rural centres of population and therefore performs less in terms of meeting community employment needs.

Option 2 would provide better support for rural job creation and rural regeneration as it does not set such tight size limits for rural business proposals. While Option 2 could generate more new rural jobs it could also lead to more widespread larger developments in the countryside. Even though it is less restrictive towards rural employment schemes it still requires rural employment proposals to be of a scale that is appropriate to a rural location thereby helping to protect the countryside and landscape character. Adverse landscape impacts and biodiversity losses can be mitigated or reduced through well designed buildings and landscaping schemes therefore option 2 performs against the economic, social and environmental objectives.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Option 2 is taken forward as the preferred policy. This is because it has the potential to generate more rural jobs due to it being slightly more permissive regarding rural business proposals while at the same time highlighting the need to protect the countryside and the landscape character of rural Colchester. This approach also accords with the objectives of paragraph 28 of the NPPF in relation to supporting rural regeneration and a prosperous rural economy.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1							✓		
Option 2		✓	✓						

Housing

Policy H2 – Housing Density

Option 1 is to retain the existing H2 policy which includes indicative housing densities in Table 2a for different locations depending on their accessibility.

Option 2 is the revised H2 policy does not include any indicative housing densities.

Option 3 is an amended version of current H2 policy where the indicative housing densities in Table H2a are replaced with descriptive text to link accessibility and housing density.

Comparative effects

Option 1 would make a positive contribution towards the regeneration of Colchester. It would deliver the most homes at the highest locations and make efficient use of land reducing the need for greenfield developments. It would also ensure people can live close to key services and facilities including sustainable transport links. As an option it is prescriptive and does not provide the flexibility to adjust density depending on need and location. Option 1 has been in use since 2008 and there is evidence to suggest that the densities in Table 2a particularly for the low accessibility areas (30-40 d/ha) represent over development in some villages in the Borough. This is also true for highly accessible locations where the indicative density of >75d/ha has been interpreted differently by different developers. This has made it difficult to oppose very high density schemes even where these have not been supported with adequate community facilities.

Option 2 will also make a positive contribution towards the regeneration of Colchester. It will deliver the highest density housing at the most sustainable locations ensuring people have good access to key services and facilities including sustainable transport networks. Option 2 provides the greatest flexibility to adjust density based on location and need which is important for both rural and rural areas. While the added flexibility of option 2 may result in more greenfield land being used particularly in rural areas this flexibility will also allow different density developments coming forward at the same locations. This makes it more responsive to changes in the housing market and consequently it will meets people's housing needs better than the other two options.

Options 3 adopts a similar approach to housing density as Option 1 by trying to match specific housing density to specific locations i.e. high rise at highly accessible locations. While it would help support regeneration by directing the highest housing densities to the most accessible locations it lacks the flexibility of Option 2. The use of descriptive text rather than indicative densities is subjective and open to interpretation by different people in the same way as Option 1 and could also lead the issues generated by Option 1 i.e. the risk of overdevelopment in both rural and urban areas.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 2 is taken forward as the preferred policy. Option 2 is considered to be the most sustainable in terms of meeting peoples housing needs and making the most efficient use of land therefore it meets social and economic objectives better than Options 1. Option 2 is also the most flexible policy option for delivering the most appropriate housing density schemes relative to accessibility, location and need.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1		✓	✓						
Option 2	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Option 3									

Policy H3 – Housing Diversity

Option 1 is to retain the current policy H3.

Option 2 is the revised policy H3 where Table 3a is deleted .

Comparative effects

Option 1 is quite restrictive as it specifies which type of housing should be provided at specific locations relative to accessibility. This approach has not enabled community needs to be fully met particularly in terms of delivering a range of housing that local people can afford to purchase.

Option 2 adopts a much more flexible approach and will deliver a better mix of housing across all locations based on local need and context. Option 2 will also be more responsive to the complexities of the housing market and community needs for housing. This will better support regeneration particularly in urban areas but it will mean that the most appropriate types of housing are delivered where they are needed. Option 2 will also deliver more attractive settlements supported with good community facilities and good quality public realm.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 2 is taken forward as the preferred policy option. Option 2 scores well against social and economic objectives as it is flexible and will ensure that a range of housing types can be delivered across different locations. will help create mixed communities and deliver a range of housing that will meet the housing needs of local communities in Colchester. This approach also accords with paragraphs 47 and 50 of the NPPF.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1									
Option 2	✓	✓	✓			✓			

Policy H4 – Affordable Housing

Option 1 is to retain the current H4 policy which sets a 35% affordable housing target.

Option 2 is the revised policy h4 which sets a 20% affordable housing target.

Option 3 is the no policy option

Comparative effects

Option 1 will place an excessive strain on the overall viability of future developments in the Borough. It will adversely affect the viability and thus the deliverability of small scale regeneration projects and if the higher 35% affordable housing target is adopted it could reduce the amount of contributions available for sustainable transport and community facilities. Option 1 only permits affordable housing on rural exceptions sites and this option could provide less incentive to landowners to bring affordable housing schemes forward on these sites.

Option 2 with its lower 20% target will ensure that affordable housing is delivered as part of wider housing proposals without affecting the overall viability of schemes. Option 2 is likely to support smaller scale regeneration projects better than option 1 and also ensure that contributions are available to support sustainable transport schemes and community facility projects making them more sustainable generally. Option 2 allows for some market housing on rural exceptions sites which will increase the delivery of affordable housing schemes in rural areas, supporting rural regeneration. Integrating affordable and market housing schemes will also help create more diverse and mixed communities who will have a range of skills that will be useable by local businesses. It will also improve people's access to services and could have a positive impact in terms of reducing the need to travel as people can live closer to key centres of population. This approach also accords with paragraph 50 and 55 of the NPPF.

Option 3 would not help secure new affordable housing in the Borough and would not help the Council meet its overall housing targets. Whilst regeneration would still continue under Option 3, it would fail to deliver a good mix of housing or create mixed sustainable communities with a range of skills to support the diverse economy of the Borough. Option 3 would consequently fail to meet people needs for housing and it could reduce some people's access to services and facilities. Under option 3 the failure to provide affordable housing in the Borough could increase the need to travel if people have to live further away from where they work due to a lack of affordable housing. Conversely where there is no requirement on developers to provide

affordable housing as part of new development, Option 3 could increase the level of contributions available for new sustainable transport initiatives which could lower dependence on car travel. Under option 3 applications for affordable housing would have to be assessed against the NPPF which is general and does not set any targets. Option 3 therefore would not create certainty around the deliverability of affordable housing. As an approach Option 3 is also contrary to paragraphs 50 and 55 of the NPPF.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1									
Option 2	✓	✓	✓		✓				
Option 3					✓				

Recommendation.

Option 2 is the preferred policy option principally because it is more likely to support the delivery of affordable housing in the Borough in both urban and rural areas without compromising the viability of future housing developments. This option meets the social and economics objective better than Option 1. It will also meet peoples needs for access to a range of housing at accessible locations close to key services and facilities in both urban and rural areas. It will help create more sustainable mixed communities who will have a range of skills that will benefit local businesses. Option 2 is more likely to deliver balanced developments supported with good infrastructure due the lower 20% affordable housing target. Option 2 allows for some market housing on rural exceptions sites which will could increase the delivery of affordable housing schemes in rural areas and support rural regeneration. As an approach Options 2 accords with paragraphs 50 and 55 of the NPPF.

Policy H5 – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

Option 1 is to retain policy H5 in its existing form

Option 2 is to amend the policy to add additional text to the policy, referring to the relevant national policy documents

Comparative effects

Overall, no differences between the policy options have been identified in sustainability terms. Both options perform well against a number of objectives, with minimal negative impacts. The areas in which the policy options have the greatest sustainability benefits are: helping to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home, helping to provide people with good access to services and facilities, and helping to reduce the need to travel.

Recommendation

There is no recommendation for this policy, as both options perform equally in sustainability terms.

Policy H6 – Rural Workers Dwellings

Option 1 is the new Rural Workers Dwellings policy.

Option 2 is the no policy option.

Comparative effects

Option 1 will provide a robust policy framework against which applications for rural workers dwellings can be properly assessed. Having such a policy is beneficial as it enables local need to be taken into account. Option 1 helps support rural regeneration and will also meet essential workers housing needs. It also helps protect the countryside and rural character as dwellings will be located in or close to existing rural businesses reducing the risk of sporadic development in the countryside.

Without a rural workers dwellings policy (Option 2) any future applications will have to be judged against the NPPF. The guidance in the NPPF is quite generic and does not take local need or circumstances into account. This approach could result in fewer applications being approved for dwellings for essential rural workers who need to live close to where they work. Option 2 would therefore fail to meet essential rural workers needs for housing.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓
Option 2									

Recommendation.

It is recommended that Option 1 is taken forward as the preferred policy. It scored well against social and economic objectives whilst ensuring that rural accommodation workers needs can be properly considered and met in Colchester Borough. Option 1 also complies with paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

Environment

Policy ENV2 – Rural Communities

Option 1 is to retain the existing ENV2 policy.

Option 2 is the amended ENV2 policy to ensure it is more inline with the NPPF regarding the treatment of Rural Exception Sites and Neighbourhood Planning.

Comparative effects

Option 1 will deliver market and affordable housing both within village settlements and on the edge of village settlement boundaries on rural exception sites. Under option 1 rural employment and rural regeneration will be supported but only for small scale businesses enterprises. Option 1 supports the delivery of new community facilities in rural areas. It promotes community led planning through the preparation of Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. Whilst these community plans can be adopted as material guidance they do not carry as much weight as Neighbourhood Plans. They cannot allocate sites for development and may therefore will not be as effective in bringing forward new community facilities or new housing in rural areas as Option 2.

Option 2 will also deliver a degree of market and affordable housing within villages and on rural exceptions sites. Option 2 permits the delivery of a proportion of market housing on rural exceptions sites to help cross subsidise the delivery of significant affordable housing on these sites. Option 1 only permits affordable housing on exceptions sites. Option 2 is less restrictive about the size of businesses that can be delivered in rural areas but proposals still have to be of a scale that is appropriate to their rural location and respect the environment. This approach is therefore more flexible and will better support rural regeneration. Option 2 supports the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans which carry statutory weight in the planning system. This option is more likely therefore to deliver new housing and community facilities where Neighbourhood Plans are being prepared.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1		✓							
Option 2	✓	✓	✓		✓				

Recommendation

It is recommended that Option 2 is taken forward as the preferred policy. It meets all 3 social economic and economic objectives and it is more flexible in terms of housing and employment provision in rural areas. This policy approach also accords with paragraphs 28, 54 and 183 in the NPPF regarding rural regeneration, Rural Exception Sites and Neighbourhood Planning.

Policy DP24 - Equestrian Activities

Option 1 is the retention of Policy DP24.

Option 2 involves the deletion of DP24.

Comparative effects

Option 1 will restrict equestrian related developments that result in the intensification of buildings in the countryside, or in the urban fringe helping to protect landscape quality and the rural character of Colchester. By supporting

equestrian activities in certain circumstances this option would help sustain the rural economy in Colchester. It does not support residential development as part of equestrian development schemes therefore it fails to consider essential rural workers housing needs. The restrictive approach of Option 1 will help protect landscape character.

The deletion of policy DP24 is not considered likely to have any significant adverse effects in planning terms. Many of the issues covered by DP24 are already covered by other policies. The protection of the countryside, landscape and wildlife are covered in Core Strategy policies ENV1, ENV2 and in Development Policy DP21. The deletion of DP24 is only acceptable if policy DP9 is amended to cover commercial equestrian developments and a new Rural Workers Dwelling policy is included in the Focused Review of the Local Plan. The unchanged current policies along with the revised DP9 and the new Rural Workers Dwelling policy H6 together are considered to provide a robust policy framework that allow future commercial and non commercial equestrian development proposals to be properly considered and justifies the deletion of DP24.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1			✓				✓	✓	
Option 2									

Recommendation

It is recommended that Policy DP24 is deleted subject to the amendment of policy DP9 to include commercial equestrian businesses and the introduction of a new Rural Workers Dwellings policy (H6). These policy changes are needed to provide a robust policy framework for assessing commercial equestrian businesses and to ensure that the needs of those employed in rural land based businesses who need to live at or close to where they work can be properly met. This approach accords with paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

Energy

Policy ER1 – Energy, Resources, Waste and Recycling

Options

Option 1 is to retain policy ER1.

Option 2 involves amendments the policy ER1 to ensure that it is more inline with the NPPF and updates to building regulations and best practice.

Comparative effects

Both options expect standards to be met under the Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM which are in line with planned changes to Building Regulations. Government plans for all new homes to be zero carbon from 2016 and commercial buildings from 2019 will affect build costs, which may

affect the delivery of new housing and employment premises across the Borough. However, the effect this will have is uncertain as the timetable for zero carbon buildings has been set for many years and is phased through staged improvements to Part L of the Building Regulations.

Delivering zero carbon homes and increasing the number of buildings using energy from renewable energy sources will help reduce carbon emissions and have a positive effect on climate change mitigation. Option 2 will have a more positive effect than option 1 as the wording is stronger. Option 1 includes a target for development to reduce carbon emissions by 15% whereas option 2 does not include this target. Whilst this would suggest that option 1 is more positive, evidence since the adoption of the Core Strategy has shown that this element of the policy is not being implemented and focussing on more sustainable buildings will result in more positive environmental effects.

Recommendation

It is recommended that option 2 is taken forward as it is more inline with the NPPF, updates to building regulations and best practice and will secure more positive environmental effects.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1									
Option 2	✓								✓

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

Design

DP1 Design and Amenity

Options

Option 1 is to retain DP1 in its existing form

Option 2 is to add additional wording to reflect the NPPF, as a result of a representation submitted by the Environment Agency.

Comparative effects

Overall, both policy options have positive sustainability impacts, with no negative impacts identified. Through the requirement for high quality design, the policy options will have a positive impact on a range of social, economic and environmental sustainability objectives. The policy options will have little or no impact on objectives 1 and 3, but are likely to have a positive impact on ensuring that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land achieving more sustainable travel, improving access to facilities including health and community facilities, creating safe and attractive public spaces and reducing crime, conserving and enhancing the townscape character, historic and cultural assets of the Borough, conserving and enhancing the natural

environment, and making efficient use of energy resources. The objective with the strongest positive impact is against objective 7, with both options helping to enhance the character and attractiveness of the Borough's settlements.

Of the two options, option 2 performs a little better than option 1 in relation to objectives 2 and 9.

Recommendation

There is little difference between policy option 1 and option 2, so either option would be beneficial in sustainability terms. Option 2 performs slightly better overall, so it is recommended that, for sustainability purposes, option 2 is carried forward into the plan as the preferred policy.

SA Objectives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Option 1									
Option 2		✓							✓

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

Section 5. Likely significant effects

This section summarises the likely significant effects of the Focused Review. Likely effects are split into the following three sections: environmental, economic and social.

Environmental

Relevant SA objectives:

2. To ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land
7. To conserve and enhance the townscape character, historic and cultural assets of the District.
8. To conserve and enhance the natural environment, natural resources and the biodiversity of the District.
9. To make efficient use of energy and resources, and reduce waste and our contribution to climate change.

The Focused Review will deliver a range of sustainability benefits, which include ensuring that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land.

The Focused Review will ensure that the highest density housing is delivered at the most accessible locations but also provides enough flexibility to enable densities to be varied even at the same location depending on local need and location. This approach will help ensure that people have good access to key services and facilities, including a range of housing types and more sustainable transport networks in the Borough. Directing the majority of residential development to the most sustainable locations will help reduce demand for greenfield developments and ensure that land is used efficiently.

The Focused Review is likely to increase the number of rural exceptions schemes coming forward due to a policy change that permits some market housing on exception sites to cross subsidise affordable housing delivery. An increase in the number of rural exceptions schemes is likely to result in the increased loss of greenfield land and negatively impact on landscape character and biodiversity. However, these effects can be mitigated and the benefits of increasing affordable housing are likely to outweigh minor negative impacts.

The fact that the Focused Review promotes growth and development means that there will inevitably be some negative impacts to the natural and historic assets. However, it is considered that the existing planning policies provide a robust framework that requires mitigation and enhancements measures to be implemented to minimise biodiversity losses, protect landscape and settlement character and to protect important historic and cultural assets across the Borough.

The Focused Review will support the delivery of zero carbon homes and more sustainable buildings. Increasing the number of sustainable buildings, including buildings using energy from renewable energy sources, will help reduce carbon emissions and have a positive effect on climate change mitigation.

Economic

Relevant SA objectives:

3. To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy and improve the vitality of town centres

The Focused Review provides greater flexibility around employment proposals, which will positively promote economic development and job creation across the Borough. It promotes the development of highly accessible land outside of centres and ensures good access to retail and associated uses in urban and rural district centres. Providing people with good access to employment, retail and leisure uses will reduce the need to travel. The vitality and viability of the Town Centre will be sustained by requiring major retail development outside of the Town Centre to provide evidence to demonstrate that it is needed to support local need and does not compete with the Town Centre. Despite this however, a risk remains that the Focused Review could undermine the Town Centre as large retail development is more likely to favour development on greenfield sites than previously developed, constrained town centre sites. Any increase in the development of greenfield sites will inevitably affect the landscape context of settlements and result in increased biodiversity losses.

The Focused Review removes reference to safeguarding local shops and services, which could reduce people's access to services close to where they live. This could also have a negative impact on development in the Town Centre as the NPPF does not recognise a difference between town centres, urban district centres, rural centres and local centres, which could result in town centre development locating to other centres.

The Focused Review supports the re-development of allocated and existing employment land where there is no prospect of a site being used for employment uses. This could reduce the supply of employment land but this is not expected to be a key problem within Focused Review Plan period as there is currently a good supply of land allocated for employment uses. There is a requirement for proposals involving the loss of employment land to be supported by evidence of lack of demand, which should provide an appropriate safeguard to ensure that deliverable employment sites are not lost to alternative uses.

The Focused Review will have a positive impact on the rural economy as the support given to a greater mix of employment uses is likely to result in a variety of uses coming forward in rural areas. The greater flexibility towards

employment uses in the countryside may increase the number of greenfield sites being developed. The Focused Review supports the provision of rural workers dwellings helping to ensure that essential rural workers housing needs can be met. Whilst it is less restrictive about the size of businesses that can be delivered in rural areas, business proposals must still be of a scale that are appropriate to a rural location. This will help support rural regeneration and demonstrates strong support for rural businesses in Colchester whilst also helping protect the countryside.

Social

Relevant SA objectives:

1. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home.
4. To achieve more sustainable travel behaviour and reduce the need to travel.
5. To improve the education, skills and health of the Borough's population
6. To create safe and attractive public spaces and reduce crime.

The Focused Review will lead to a range of sustainability benefits, primarily social and economic, which will include ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home and that more sustainable travel networks are delivered by guiding developments to the most accessible locations.

The Focused Review will ensure that a better mix of housing will be delivered by adopting a flexible approach based on local need and context. It will also be more responsive to the complexities of the housing market and community needs for housing. By delivering more balanced housing schemes at different locations peoples housing needs can be better met in both urban and rural areas and their access to facilities and services improved. This includes improved access to sustainable transport networks particularly in urban areas. The Focused Review will deliver the highest density housing at the most sustainable locations; ensuring people have good access to key services and facilities including sustainable transport networks. This will help increase peoples ability to travel more sustainably.

The Focused Review will increase the delivery of affordable housing provision across the Borough without placing an excessive strain on the overall viability of future developments. It permits some market housing on rural exception sites which will make a contribution towards overall housing targets for the Borough. It is likely to increase the number of rural exceptions schemes coming forward which will help address rural housing shortfalls including for affordable housing.

Government plans for all new homes to be zero carbon from 2016 and commercial buildings from 2019 will affect build costs, which may affect the delivery of sustainable housing and employment premises across the Borough. However, the effect this will have is uncertain as the timetable for

zero carbon buildings has been set for many years and is phased through staged improvements to Part L of the Building Regulations.

It is likely that the Focused Review will improve the overall sustainability of some rural settlements by addressing local housing shortfalls whilst also enabling other community facilities to be delivered. This contributes towards the wider regeneration of rural Colchester. The need for rural workers accommodation (both permanent or temporary) will be met as part of the overall housing mix in the Borough. Any environmental impacts will be insignificant as the design and scale of new rural workers dwellings will have to reflect their rural location and their function as housing for rural worker. A positive impact might be a slight reduction in car travel for some rural workers at least in relation to work related journeys.

The Focused Review promotes Neighbourhood Plans, which carry statutory weight in the planning system, and these could help to deliver new community facilities in existing communities where Neighbourhood Plan are being prepared. The Focused Review requires all developments to be high quality in terms of their design and will help to ensure that safe and attractive public spaces, which reduce the fear and incidence of crime are created.

Collectively the Focussed Review will deliver the most sustainable development for Colchester in accordance with the NPPF.

Proposed mitigation and enhancement measures

To avoid economic development in inaccessible locations it was recommended that wording be added to policy CE1 about providing people with good access to their needs.

No other mitigation or enhancement measures were recommended. This is unsurprising considering that this is a Focused Review and involves amendments to existing policies, which have already been subject to SA.

Section 6. Monitoring

It is a requirement of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive and part of SAs that the significant effects of implementing a plan must be monitored to identify unforeseen effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action. Colchester Borough Council produces an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) every December and this includes an SA section.

Within this section an outline of the progress against each Sustainability Appraisal objective is set out and adverse effects are highlighted. The aim of this is to ensure that if any adverse effects are occurring appropriate mitigation measures can be put in place.