Sustainability Appraisal

Colchester’s Core Strategy: Amendment to the Preferred Options

Colchester Borough Council

May 2007
1. Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

Colchester Borough Council is currently producing a Local Development Framework (LDF) to replace Colchester’s Local Plan (CLP). The LDF will be made up of a suite of documents including Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The Core Strategy DPD will set out the overall strategy for the Local Development Framework and include core policies to guide development. All the DPDs and SPDs included in the LDF need to be subject to sustainability appraisal (SA), under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The SAs conducted must also meet the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC (also known as the SEA Directive).

The Purpose of the SA

When preparing the Core Strategy (CS), Colchester Borough Council (CBC) is required by law to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal and a Strategic Environmental Assessment as detailed above. The Government recommends that these two requirements are met through one integrated process, which we have called the Sustainability Appraisal (or SA), with the aim of achieving the goal of sustainable development.

The purpose of the SA is to assist the Council prepare the draft Core Strategy by identifying the key sustainability issues facing the borough, appraising the sustainability of potential options, determine what would be the likely effects of the strategy, and put forward recommendations to improve it. The aim was to ensure that the draft CS has as many positive effects as possible, and that any negative effects are avoided when the policies in the draft CS are turned into development on the ground.

Preparation of the SA

This SA Report has been prepared by CBC’s Spatial Policy Team, to integrate with and inform the preparation of the Core Strategy itself. The team received independent training by Land Use Consultants. Previous SA Reports have been undertaken by Essex County Council Environmental Assessment Team (ECC) who provided advice to CBC throughout the preparation of the draft Core Strategy. ECC have also been involved in the SA of a number of Supplementary Planning Documents for the Council.

The sustainability appraisal process has been an integral part of the preparation of the Core Strategy. Pre-production work began in 2004 and ECC produced the first scoping report to support the Issues and Options document. Comments on the Scoping Report were taken on board during the SA process. The SA was prepared for consultation with the Core Strategy Issues and Options document in February and March 2006.
ECC also prepared the Scoping Report and SA that accompanied the CS Preferred Options. Public consultation took place on these documents in November and December 2006. In light of consultation response, new Government policy, and the evolving evidence base, CBC decided to amend the Preferred Options document and prepare the SA Report ‘in house’.

This SA report has been produced to accompany this “Amendment to the Preferred Options” (APO) and to provide stakeholders with clear information and justification for the identification of issues, the assessment of options, and the appraisal of effects from the preferred policies and strategy.

The SA has been used to identify the sustainability advantages and disadvantages of all the different options for the spatial distribution of development and the core policies set out in the Preferred Options. It has been produced alongside the emerging Core Strategy DPD, and is being published for consultation at the same time as the Core Strategy: Amendment to the Preferred Options to provide the public and statutory bodies with an opportunity to express their opinions on the SA Report and to use it as a reference point in commenting on the Core Strategy DPD. The consultation period for the sustainability appraisal is 21st May to 9 July 2007.

What the SA Contains
A key product of the SA process is this SA Report, which contains:

- An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;
- The SA objectives, which are relevant to the plan or programme, and the way the objectives and any environmental and sustainability considerations have been taken into account;
- Baseline information about the environmental, social and economic characteristics of Colchester;
- Social, environmental and economic issues for Colchester;
- An appraisal of the potential options, and how environmental and sustainability issues were considered in developing the preferred options;
- The likely significant effects of the strategy on the environment and sustainability;
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment and sustainability as a result of the strategy; and
- A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring

Social, Environmental and Economic Issues

**Economic Issues**
As the current economy of the Borough is generally good and unemployment is low, the key sustainability issues for the economy are around maintaining a healthy, vibrant and diverse economy into the future. This may include reviving the rural economy. The main urban areas of Colchester Borough
provide the focus for local communities with the majority of facilities, services and activities being concentrated there.

It is essential that planning for transport is an integral part of the whole Local Development Framework, including the Core Strategy. It will be particularly important to improve and maintain Colchester’s transportation infrastructure so that the Borough can continue to attract businesses, retailers, tourists and home buyers, therefore boosting the local economy. If current car ownership and usage trends continue it will be important to prevent the creation of further dispersed growth patterns in Colchester that often result in high car dependency. In order to encourage a decrease in car usage, it will be important to develop an integrated, affordable public transport network, including fast and frequent bus services. Improving pedestrian and cycle provision will also help deliver this objective.

There are currently four major regeneration sites in the Borough, each of which should boost the economy. An additional regeneration area at North Station is proposed for inclusion in the Core Strategy to improve a key urban gateway. The tourist industry should also be much improved, especially with the opening of the Community Stadium and the Firstsite Visual Arts Facility.

**Environmental Issues**

Maintaining and enhancing the natural and built environment of the Borough are very important to the residents and communities of Colchester. One key consideration will be the preservation of countryside areas and strategic green gaps between settlements. New development will also need to consistently achieve best practice in sustainable construction and design.

There is a variety of good quality landscapes and habitats, supporting a diverse range of species including internationally significant areas. New development has the potential to lead to the loss of habitat and species. This must be prevented where possible and mitigated in all other circumstances. Colchester’s Local Development Framework (LDF) will promote the reuse of land and require a density of development that makes the most efficient use of land whilst acknowledging sites of ecological importance.

Climate Change is a major issue that the whole LDF will need to consider. The development of renewable sources of energy will also need to be encouraged. Water quality and usage are other important issues for the Borough.

**Social Issues**

The provision of housing to meet government targets and local needs is a major issue in Colchester. In planning this housing provision, it will need to be ensured that dwellings are located in areas that are not at risk to flooding. It will be increasingly important to match the population growth with economic growth within the Borough and as projections indicate an aging population the impact of smaller, older households on services and housing will need to be managed. Similarly, meeting the demand for affordable housing, including
allocation of sites for gypsies and travellers, will also need to be considered and met.

For a number of reasons access to a variety of services and facilities can be an issue for Colchester residents. There are areas in the Borough where deprivation exists and which contrast with the surrounding more affluent areas. It is therefore important to encourage social inclusion.

As Colchester is predominantly a rural area, rural isolation can also be an issue. Recent public consultation has also highlighted the perceived need for villages to retain a sense of community.

**Sustainability Objectives**

The following sustainability objectives have been used to appraise the Core Strategy;

1. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home.
2. To ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land.
3. To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy and improve the vitality of town centres.
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.
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 greenhouse emissions.

**Appraisal of the Options**

Chapter 5 considers the issues raised above and appraises the potential options against the sustainability objectives.

**Strategic Options**

Two overarching options have been developed to reflect different strategic directions for growth and change in the Borough of Colchester;

- Option 1 - This option emphasises the importance of the Town Centre and the regeneration of previously developed land. It directs development towards the most accessible and sustainable locations, and plans for the provision of transport, employment and community facilities to support the growth areas. This option will support the
housing and employment development with sustainable transport connections.

- Option 2 - This option could allocate additional greenfield land to accommodate future housing, retail and business development, rather than seeking to regenerate previously developed land. These locations are not likely to have good access to the Town Centre or key public transport interchanges, therefore significant investment in road infrastructure will be needed to accommodate this growth.

Overall, the Sustainability Appraisal determined that Option 1 and the related policy options were more sustainable than Option 2 and other alternative policies. Option 1 will improve the vitality and viability of the Town Centre and promote the regeneration of established communities and rundown areas. The option will also promote more sustainable travel behaviour and minimise impacts on the countryside.

Policy Options
The appraisal of policy options was undertaken in Chapter 5 and the preferred options are set out below.

SD1 - Sustainable Development Locations
The preferred policy option seeks to direct development towards accessible and previously developed locations, and encourage regeneration. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option would actively enhance the Town Centre and key Gateways (e.g. North Station) and therefore help to develop a prestigious regional centre.

SD2 - Supporting Communities with Facilities and Infrastructure
The preferred policy option seeks to ensure that development reviews community needs and provide the necessary facilities and infrastructure arising from the proposal. Planning obligations will continue to be used, but standard charges will be employed where appropriate to help deliver strategic projects. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option would better support sustainable communities with the necessary infrastructure and facilities.

CE1 - Centre and Employment Hierarchy
The preferred policy option seeks to focus new employment development and economic growth at accessible locations and previously developed land. It sets forth a hierarchy for employment development that coordinates the use and scale of developments with the accessibility and role of different areas. The SA determined that the preferred option would offer more flexibility to manage change, support mixed use development and reduce the need to travel.

CE2 - Mixed Use Centres
The preferred policy option focuses retail, office and mixed use developments on the Town Centre and Urban Gateways, which are the most accessible locations in the Borough. This option supports smaller scale development in
District Centres and Neighbourhood Centres to provide for the needs of local communities.

The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option would support the important role of the Town Centre and help create a prestigious regional centre. This option will focus this growth on the Town Centre and encourage regeneration.

**CE2 - Employment Zones**
The preferred policy option outlines the role of the Strategic Employment Zones and Local Employment Zones to accommodate industry, warehousing and business developments. This option seeks to further enhance Strategic Employment Zones with infrastructure improvements. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option would support the regeneration of the Town Centre and Urban Gateways and also help improve accessibility. This option would also ensure that industry, warehouse and business developments could locate at high quality sites with good access to strategic roads.

**H1 - Housing Delivery**
The preferred policy option will deliver approximately 19,000 homes between 2001 and 2023 in the Town Centre and four Growth Areas in Colchester Town, including sustainable urban extensions to the north and south-west. Housing development will take a sequential approach that gives priority to accessible and previously developed land (PDL), with the aim of providing over 80% of housing on PDL.

The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option was the most sustainable option in regard to delivering regeneration and optimising accessibility. This option provides a range of housing opportunities that provide people with good access to there needs and minimise the need to travel.

**H2 - Housing Density**
The preferred policy option provides guidance on the appropriate densities for new development that relate to the accessibility of a location and are informed by local context. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option would make efficient use of land and optimise accessibility, whilst minimising impacts on the character of settlements. This option would also support the regeneration of rundown areas and the viability of the Town Centre.

**H3 - Housing Diversity**
The preferred policy option indicates a broad mix of housing types which needs to be provided in light of community context and housing need. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option would help provide a more diverse mix of housing to meet community needs, whilst avoiding an overly prescriptive approach.

**H4 - Affordable Housing**
The preferred policy option commits the council to securing 35% of new dwellings to be provided as affordable housing on developments of 10 or more dwellings, except for rural villages where the threshold is 3 or more dwellings. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option would increase the delivery of affordable housing and help create mixed communities, whilst not undermining the viability of delivering the minimum housing provision. This option also reflects the regional policy target outlined in the East of England Plan, and therefore seeks a consistent approach with neighbouring Local Authorities.

H5 - Gypsy and Travellers
The preferred policy options identifies a site to meet gypsy and traveller need at Severalls Lane and provides that additional sites for gypsy and travellers will be identified in the Site Allocations DPD to meet future need. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option would help meet diverse housing needs and create inclusive mixed communities.

CF1 - Community Facilities
The preferred policy option commits the Council to working with partners to deliver strategic community projects to support the Community Strategy and to develop Colchester as a prestigious regional centre. It requires new development to contribute towards the provision of community facilities and supports the retention and enhancement of existing community facilities. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option would support regeneration and the provision of centrally located community facilities to support growth.

UR1 - Regeneration
The preferred policy option provides for the enhancement of Colchester as a prestigious regional centre through regeneration in four areas previously targeted for regeneration, St. Botolphs, East Colchester, North Colchester, and the Garrison, and one new area - North Station. These areas will then be linked to the Town Centre and other areas through improved transport links. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred policy option would provide for a greater combined impact through the addition of a new area and by coordinating the provision of transport and infrastructure to serve all the regeneration areas.

UR2 - Built Design and Character
The preferred policy option provides for securing high quality design and enhancing Colchester’s historic character through the use of context appraisals, sustainable construction, and innovative design. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred policy option would achieve higher standard of design and sustainability than the alternatives.

PR1 - People-friendly Streets
The preferred policy option provides that the Council will promote and secure attractive, safe and people-friendly streets which will encourage more walking, cycling, recreation and local shopping. The Sustainability Appraisal considered that the preferred option would better achieve the sustainability
objectives than the alternatives particularly in regard to promoting sustainable travel behaviour and enhancing the townscape.

PR2 - Open Space
The preferred policy option provides for a network of strategic green links between the rural hinterland, river corridors and key green spaces within Colchester Town, and ensures that a minimum amount of private/communal open space will be provided for each new home. The Sustainability Appraisal found that the preferred option would be more sustainable than the alternatives as it would improve residents’ access to open spaces and recreation opportunities and contribute positively towards biodiversity and townscape character.

TA1 - Accessibility and Changing Travel Behaviour
The preferred policy option emphasises and supports the need to locate development in areas which reduce the need to travel and provide sustainable travel solutions. A key part is to maximise the use of sustainable modes by changing travel behaviour away from the car through travel planning to help overcome congestion. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option will improve accessibility, reduce the need to travel by car and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This option will also support regeneration and the role of the Town Centre.

TA2 - Walking and Cycling
The preferred policy option intends to create high quality walking and cycling networks to facilitate travel behaviour change. Changes to the Town Centre will be sought to give priority to these modes. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred policy option would improve access to the Town Centre and thus stimulate economic activity and a more vibrant night time economy. This option would reduce car traffic and carbon emissions and also promote active and healthy lifestyles.

TA3 - Public Transport
The preferred policy option seeks to improve the public transport network, including delivering Transit Corridors, Park and Ride and Gateway enhancements. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred policy option would promote more sustainable travel, thus reducing traffic, carbon emissions, and the reliance on cars. This option would also support regeneration of rundown areas and the vitality of the Town Centre.

TA4 - Roads and Traffic
The preferred policy option involves improvements to both the strategic and local road network. The approach is to make the best use of the existing infrastructure, improve key aspects of the network and manage demand through the use of alternatives and technology. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option will support the Borough’s economy, sustainable development and transport opportunities.

TA5 - Parking
The preferred policy option seeks to reduce town centre long stay parking which in the main is from peak hour car commuting which causes network congestion. Park and ride will be provided to catch commuters from outside of the town, and also provide a quick and reliable car free access to the town for visitors. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred policy option would enhance the public realms and accessibility, and help reduce congestion and carbon emission.

**NE1 - Natural Environment**  
The preferred policy will conserve and enhance Colchester’s natural environment, countryside and coastline. Strategic green links and green breaks between Colchester Town and the rural hinterland will be protected and enhanced. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred policy option best supports the aspiration to ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land. The preferred option will also protect biodiversity and landscape character.

**NE2 - Rural Communities**  
The preferred policy option supports appropriate local-scale development in villages. It also provides that the design and construction of new village construction should be high quality in all respects and should contribute to the needs of the local community. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred policy option would help meet local needs in regard to housing, employment and community facilities, whilst minimising impacts on local character and sustainable travel.

**ER1 - Energy, Resources, Waste and Recycling**  
The preferred policy option would require the Council to meet Government targets requiring all new homes to be zero carbon by 2016. It would also include ambitious renewable energy and recycling targets. The Sustainability Appraisal determined that the preferred option would have substantial positive implications for reducing the Borough’s impact on climate change and meeting sustainability objectives, whilst supporting the deliverability of housing targets.

**Appraisal of Preferred Policy Directions**

The preferred policy options are outlined by spatial theme and further appraised in Chapter 6 to identify sustainability implications and proposed mitigation and monitoring.

**Sustainable Development (SD)**  
The Sustainability Appraisal of these preferred policies identified potential adverse effects in regard to the broad issues of flood risk, European sites, infrastructure capacity and delivery.

The outcomes of the flood risk assessment the Council is undertaking will help inform master planning and design guidance. To minimise the risk associated with flood affected areas the Core Strategy does not seek to
intensify development beyond established master plans and development briefs.

The recreational impacts on designated European sites can be best mitigated through the provision of alternative open space and recreational facilities which will also help retain biodiversity.

The preferred policies seek to optimise the collection of development contributions, but the Council acknowledges that it will also need to source public funding.

**Centres and Employment (CE)**

Overall the SA of the preferred CE policies identified potential adverse effects in regard to the broad issues of congestion in the Town Centre, accessibility to employment zones and risks for employment delivery.

Localised congestion is not necessarily a bad outcome but traffic needs to be carefully managed. It is essential that high quality and convenient sustainable alternatives to the car are provided. Improvements to the streetscape and the public realm will also help mitigate the amenity impacts of local traffic in Town Centres. Many existing employment zones are poorly serviced by public transport at present, but the Core Strategy seeks to deliver improved public transport links to the Strategic Employment Zones.

It is important to monitor progress to ensure that employment targets are achieved. The Annual Monitoring Report will provide the evidence to show how the Borough is progressing with regards to the number of jobs created and the floorspace provided.

**Housing (H)**

Overall the Sustainability Appraisal of the preferred options for Housing identified potential adverse effects in regard to the broad issues of flooding, gypsy and travellers, affordable housing and the risks for housing delivery.

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) single issue review on Gypsy and Travellers needs across the region which will inform the Borough’s needs for further sites. The policy has built flexibility to respond to these results.

The preferred policy raises affordable housing requirements consistent with the East of England Plan’s target, but the threshold is lower than the national indicative threshold of 15 dwellings in PPS3: Housing. The preferred policy was considered to be the most sustainable option in light of available evidence, The Housing Market Assessment currently underway will test the viability of the options further to ensure that it does not undermine the deliver of housing and associated facilities and infrastructure.

**Community Facilities (CF)**

Monitoring of community facilities delivery will be needed to ensure that it is proportionate to a particular area’s needs and is prioritised appropriately with
other needs such as affordable housing placing financial demands on development. While funding has been identified for the strategic projects identified in the preferred policy, the overall level of funding for community facilities is reliant on development delivering sufficient levels of planning gain.

**Urban Renaissance (UR)**
Urban regeneration policies could have a negative effect on social inclusion and affordable housing through gentrification. Urban regeneration areas will need to include affordable housing and start-up business units to address the gentrification effects. Design guidance and requirements to provide and retain open space will be required to mitigate the potential effects of development on biodiversity within regeneration areas.

**Public Realm (PR)**
While the Sustainability Appraisal found overall positive effects for the public realm policies, their success depends on the successful implementation of other policies in the plan.

Monitoring of streetscape improvements will be required to assess how they contribute to the wider benefits of regeneration and town centre vitality. Monitoring of open space delivery will be needed to ensure that it is proportionate to a particular area’s needs.

**Transport and Accessibility (TA)**
The Sustainability Appraisal of these preferred policies identified potential adverse effects in regard to the broad issues of town centre congestion, car parking, amenity impacts of transport projects, control and management of transport, and the risks for delivery of transport infrastructure and services.

The focus on the Town Centre and other key centres is likely to result in localised congestion issues, although this is not necessarily a bad outcome. Busy and successful Town Centres will usually have localised congestion. It is important that localised congestion does not obstruct public transport movements, and traffic is managed to minimise impacts on amenity and safety. It is essential that high quality and convenient sustainable alternatives to the car are provided to and within the Town Centre to reduce congestion implications.

The impacts of specific transport projects, including noise, character and biodiversity, will need to be identified, addressed and mitigated at the subsequent planning and project stages.

**Natural Environment (NE)**
The Sustainability Appraisal did not identify any significant adverse impacts arising from the natural environment policies. Monitoring of greenfield land development rates and biodiversity indicators in the Annual Monitoring Report will allow the Borough to monitor the effectiveness of countryside protection policies. The impact of rural business diversification will also require monitoring to ensure that businesses address local employment need and avoid significant negative environmental impacts.
Energy, Waste, Resources and Recycling (ER)
The Sustainability Appraisal of these preferred policies identified potential adverse effects in regard to the broad viability of housing delivery. The preferred policy options involves a risk of unduly obstructing housing delivery due to costs involved in achieving high standards of sustainable construction. The costs of sustainable construction, renewable energy and LCT are expected to decrease significantly in the next few years as technologies improve and larger economies of scale are created. The changes in these costs needs to be monitored carefully to review the viability of achieving the trajectory set out in the preferred policy and to ensure that it does not obstruct housing delivery and regeneration.

Implementation

The final chapter of the Sustainability Appraisal looks at how the results of the appraisals undertaken will influence future plans and how any likely effects are to be monitored during the life time of the Core Strategy.

The Sustainability Appraisal has identified a number of issues, adverse effects and risks resulting from preferred options and the strategy that need to be addressed either within the Core Strategy or in subsequent documents in the LDF. The Core Strategy touches on many issues at a broad strategic level, but does not set out details to address complexities associated with all these issues. The Core Strategy has been amended were appropriate to help mitigate or provide contingencies for potential adverse impacts and risks. The Core Strategy submission document will seek to further address any additional issues identified at consultation. The SA Report that accompanies the submission Core Strategy will also further detail how impacts and risks will be addressed in subsequent DPDs and SPDs.

Under the SEA Directive Local Authorities are required to monitor the implementation of significant environmental effects that result from the policies within the Core Strategy. Monitoring of the SA outcomes ensures that any adverse impacts are addressed at an early stage and appropriate contingency measures are put in place. All aspects of the SA will be monitored by the Council as part of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which is submitted to the Government Office in December of each year.

Commenting on the Sustainability Appraisal

All comments on the report received before the end of the consultation period (9 July 2007) will be reviewed and taken into account during the preparation of the Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal for submission to the Government.
2. Background

2.1 Development of the Colchester’s Local Development Framework

Colchester’s new Local Development Framework will contain a series of Local Development Documents, including Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The production of the Local Development Framework follows on from the development of the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy, which is expected to be issued during the summer of 2008 and is also subject to SA. Colchester’s Local Development Framework will need to demonstrate conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Borough’s Community Strategy.

The timetable for the delivery of the Local Development Scheme for Colchester Borough Council’s LDF programme is set out in Appendix E. Three Development Plan Documents are currently programmed for Colchester:

- Core Strategy DPD
- Site Allocations DPD
- Development Policies DPD

The overarching Core Strategy DPD is being developed first in line with Government guidance on the priorities for Development Plan Documents.

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy DPD will set out the overall strategy for the Local Development Framework and include core policies to guide development. Other DPDs produced will therefore have to conform to the Core Strategy and be supportive of its vision, objectives and spatial strategy. Accordingly the Site Allocations DPD and Development Plan DPD will not be progressed to the preferred options stage until the Inspector’s decision is received on the Core Strategy. The preparation of the Core Strategy involves 3 broad stages:

- Issues and Options
- Preferred Options
- Submission

Pre-production work started on Colchester’s Local Development Framework in 2004 with a public consultation exercise to identify the key issues that local people in Colchester felt needed to be addressed across the Borough. To support the development of the Core Strategy additional background studies were also commissioned:

- Retail Study (February 2007)
- Housing Land Availability Study (March 2007)
- Employment Land Study (May 2007)
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (June 2007)
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (September 2007)
• Landscape Character Assessment (November 2005)
• Townscape Character Assessment (June 2006)
• Open Space Study (PPG17) (August 2007)
• Hotel Demand Study (April 2007)
• Housing Stock Information (March 2007)

Responses to consultation were used to prepare the Core Strategy Issues and Options document which was published for a 6 week public consultation. The Council then began preparation of the Core Strategy Preferred Options document following consultation to reflect comments received from statutory and public stakeholders. The Preferred Options document set out a Spatial Vision and Strategy alongside policies and options for the development of Colchester Borough until 2021. The Preferred Options document was subject to 7 weeks public consultation in Nov-Dec 2006.

The Preferred Options for the Core Strategy DPD contain the following elements, all of which have been appraised as part of the SA process:
• Introduction
• Spatial Portrait
• Vision and Objectives
• Spatial Strategy
• Preferred Core Policies
• Alternative Options
• Implementation

In light of consultation response, new Government policy, and the evolving evidence base, Colchester Borough Council decided to amend the Preferred Options document and consult for a further 7 weeks commencing May 2007. This SA report has been produced to accompany this ‘Amendment to the Preferred Options’ (APO) and to provide stakeholders with clear information and justification for the identification of issues, the assessment of options, and the appraisal of effects from the preferred policies and strategy.

This Sustainability Appraisal follows on from previous SA reports that accompanied the previous Issues & Options document (January 2006) and the Preferred Options document (Nov 2006). The previous Sustainability Appraisal reports were undertaken by Essex County Council’s Environmental Assessment Team. Recommendations from this were used to inform the preparation of subsequent Core Strategy documents. This SA Report for the Core Strategy: Amendment to the Preferred Options (APO) has been prepared by Colchester Borough Council, in order to better integrate with and inform the plan-making process.

The Core Strategy and the associated Sustainability Appraisal will be further progressed in light of the consultation responses from stakeholders and it is intended that the final Core Strategy submission document will be published and consulted upon in November 2007, with the examination in public expected in mid 2008.
2.2 Purpose of the SA

The purpose of a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to fully integrate environmental, social and economic considerations into the preparation and adoption of development plan documents and policies to support and promote sustainable development objectives.

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Sustainability Appraisal is mandatory for Regional Spatial Strategies, Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs).

The term sustainable development has been widely used since its inception by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 and refers to “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

The UK government has set four aims for sustainable development:

- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- effective protection of the environment
- the prudent use of natural resources
- maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

As well as an SA, DPD documents must also undergo an Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with European Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes. Whilst the SA examines all sustainability related effects including social and economic impacts, SEA is focused primarily on environmental impacts.

The SA and SEA are distinct, however there is a large amount of overlap between the European requirements and the SA. This allows these to be combined into one process for the LDF assessment. For the purposes of this document the combined process will be referred to as the Sustainability Appraisal. This will be undertaken in accordance with government guidance ensuring that the requirements of the SEA Directive are met. This report forms the consultation draft of the environmental report required under Article 5 of Directive 2001/42/EC and addresses parts (a) to (j) inclusive of the information referred to in Article 5(1), as listed in Annex 1 of that Directive (see section 2.3 below).

This SA incorporates the requirements of the SEA directive for a strategic environmental assessment of plans and programmes. It also incorporates the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) for a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). The SA incorporates economic, social and environmental issues. Where the SA results in different findings or recommendations from the SEA process, this was highlighted in the document.
2.3 Objectives and Contents

Spatial Objectives
The spatial objectives for the emerging Core Strategy are set below:

Sustainable Development
• Focus new development at sustainable locations to support existing communities, local businesses, sustainable transport and to protect greenfield land.
• Provide the necessary infrastructure and facilities to support new and existing communities.
• Minimise the Borough’s greenhouse gas emissions and respond to the effects of climate change.

Centres and Employment
• Create a prestigious regional centre and a vibrant network of district and local centres that stimulate economic activity and provide residents’ needs at highly accessible locations.
• Facilitate the provision of quality jobs to support the prosperity of our growing community

Housing
• Provide decent and affordable housing at accessible locations to accommodate our growing community.
• Provide a range of housing options to meet the diverse needs of the whole community

Community Facilities
• Provide excellent and accessible health, education, culture and leisure facilities to meet the needs of Colchester’s growing community.
• Promote active and healthy lifestyles and strive for excellence in education and culture.

Urban Renaissance
• Revitalise rundown areas and create new inclusive high quality and sustainable communities.
• Promote high quality design and sustain Colchester’s historic buildings and features

Public Realm
• Improve streetscapes, open spaces and strategic green links to provide attractive and accessible spaces for residents to live, work, shop, and relax.

Accessibility and Transportation
• Focus development at accessible locations which support public transport, walking and cycling, and reduce the need to travel.
• Develop Colchester as a Regional Transport Node, improving transport connections and gateways within the Borough and to the wider region.
• Provide excellent public transportation, walking and cycling connections between centres, communities and their needs.
• Improve the strategic road network and manage traffic and parking demand.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities
• Protect Colchester’s natural environment, countryside and coastline.
• Support appropriate local employment and housing development in villages and rural communities.

Energy, Resources, Recycling and Waste
• Encouraging renewable energy and efficient use of scarce resources
• Reduce, reuse and recycle waste.

Contents
The Core Strategy Preferred Options document contains the following elements:
• Introduction
• Spatial Portrait
• Vision and Objectives
• Spatial Strategy
• Preferred Core Policies
• Alternative Options
• Implementation

However, the Core Strategy Amendment to the Preferred Options only revises the following elements:
• Vision and Objectives
• Spatial Strategy
• Preferred Core Policies
• Alternative Options

2.4 Compliance with the SEA Directive
The SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) sets out (Annex 1) the information to be included in an Environmental Report in order for it to fulfil the requirements of the Directive. The table below provides a summary of the requirements of the SEA Directive and a reference to where these have been addressed in this SA Report (derived from Figure 4 Draft SA Guidance, ODPM 2004)

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<th>Requirements of SEA Directive</th>
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<td>(a) an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.</td>
<td>Section 2.1, 2.3 &amp; 4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution there of without the implementation of the plan or programme.</td>
<td>Section 4.2, 4.3 &amp; 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following table identifies the links between the Sustainability Objectives and the SEA Directives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Objectives</th>
<th>SEA Directive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy and improve the vitality of town centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To achieve more sustainable travel behaviour and reduce the need to travel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>To improve the education, skills and health of the Borough’s population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>To create safe and attractive public spaces and reduce crime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>To conserve and enhance the townscape character, historic and cultural assets of the District.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>To conserve and enhance the natural environment, natural resources and the biodiversity of the District.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Methodology

3.1 Preparation of the Sustainability Appraisal

The purpose of SEA/SA is to enable the integration of environmental, social and economic considerations into the preparation and adoption of development plan documents and policies to support and promote sustainable development objectives. It should an integral part of good plan making involving checking and re-checking plans to identify and report on significant effects of the plan and the extent to which sustainable development is likely to be achieved.

When preparing DPDs and Supplementary Planning Documents, planning authorities must also conduct an environmental assessment in accordance with the SEA Directive. The objective of the Directive 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’.

ODPM guidance on Sustainability Appraisal (which supersedes the ODPM SEA guidance) explains the difference between environmental assessments required under the SEA Directive and Sustainability Appraisal of development plans required by the UK Government. Guidance clearly shows how assessment to comply with the SEA Directive can be integrated with current practice on Sustainability Appraisal. Simply put, SA examines all sustainability related effects including social and economic impacts SEA is focused primarily on environmental impacts.

Although SA and SEA are distinct processes, there is a large amount of overlap between the SEA European requirements and the SA. This allows them to be combined into one process for the LDF assessment and for the purposes of this report the combined process will be referred to as the Sustainability Appraisal.

3.2 Stages of the Sustainability Appraisal

The SA guidance explains how to carry out SA as an integral part of the plan-making process. The table below sets out the main stages of the plan-making process and shows how these are integrated with and informed by the SA.
Links Between SA and ‘Plan-Making’ (ODPM 2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DPD Stage 1: Pre-production – Evidence Gathering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA stages and tasks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A1: Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A2: Collecting baseline information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A3: Identifying sustainability issues and problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A4: Developing the SA framework.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A5: Consulting on the scope of the SA.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DPD Stage 2: Production</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SA stages and tasks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• B1: Testing the DPD objectives against the SA framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• B2: Developing the DPD options.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• B3: Predicting the effects the DPD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• B4: Evaluating the effects of the DPD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• B5: Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• B6: Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the DPDs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• C1: Preparing the SA Report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage D: Consulting on the preferred options of the DPD and SA Report</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• D1: Public participation on the preferred options of the DPD and the SA Report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• D2(i): Appraising significant changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DPD Stage 3: Examination</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA stages and tasks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• D2(ii): Appraising significant changes resulting from representations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DPD Stage 4: Adoption and monitoring</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SA stages and tasks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• D3: Making decisions and providing information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the DPD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• E1: Finalising aims and methods for monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• E2: Responding to adverse effects.</td>
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</table>
To date, the following SA stages have been completed for the emerging Colchester Core Strategy DPD:

- SA Scoping Report (Core Strategy: Issues and Options)
- SA Report (Core Strategy: Preferred Options)

**SA Scoping Report (Core Strategy: Issues and Options)**
To help define Issues and Options, Colchester Borough Council initially sought the views of local residents about the priority issues to be addressed within the Core Strategy. This work was carried out around 2004 to 2005. Separate consultation events were held for Council Members, developers and other stakeholders in the Borough to seek their views on the Spatial Vision and Objectives for the future development of the Borough.

Colchester Borough Council commissioned Essex County’s Environmental Assessment Team in November 2005 to prepare an initial SA Scoping Report at the start of the SA process.

The initial Scoping Report was prepared in accordance with the following Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) guidance:


These reports were superseded by the following documents that were used to guide the latter stages of the preparation of the SA

- ‘Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks’ (November 2005).

As part of the Scoping Report, Essex County Council’s Environmental Assessment Team collated baseline data for the Borough of Colchester and carried out a review of plans and projects relevant to the production of Colchester’s emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).

Colchester Borough Council’s SA Scoping Report (2005) was issued for consultation to Statutory Consultation Bodies and other relevant persons including:

- English Heritage
- Natural England
- Environment Agency

**SA Report (Core Strategy: Preferred Options)**
The outcomes of consultation on the Issues and Options document and the SA Scoping Report informed the next stages of the plan-making process and the SA process. Further evidence was also gathered to inform the identification and appraisal of options. This work culminated in the preparation of the Core Strategy Preferred Options document (November 2006) which
sets out the Spatial Portrait, Vision and Objectives, Spatial Strategy and Core Policies.

This was accompanied by the SA Report prepared by Essex County Council’s Environmental Assessment Team which provided a comparative assessment of the options and an appraisal of the impacts of the preferred policies and the strategy as a whole. The preferred options and alternatives were assessed against the Sustainability Objectives identified in the SA Scoping Report. The appraisal involved predicting and assessing the effects of the Preferred Options, using baseline data to qualify and quantify effects wherever possible. Consideration was given to measures that could be introduced to mitigate any adverse effects on sustainability and maximise benefits.

The SA Report was issued for consultation alongside the Core Strategy Preferred Options document in compliance with Regulation 26 of the 2004 Regulations and Article 8 of the SEA Directive between November 2006 and January 2007.

**SA Report (Core Strategy: Amendment to the Preferred Options)**

In light of consultation response, new Government policy, and the evolving evidence base, Colchester Borough Council decided to amend the Preferred Options document and consult for a further 7 weeks commencing May 2007. This SA report has been produced to accompany this ‘Amendment to the Preferred Options’ (APO) and to provide stakeholders with clear information and justification for the identification of issues, the assessment of options, and the appraisal of effects from the preferred policies and strategy.

This SA Report was prepared internally by Colchester Borough Council’s Spatial Policy Team. This SA reflect the amendments made to the Core Strategy Preferred Options and it compared the economic, social and environmental impacts of the policy options against the revised Sustainability Objectives and SA Framework. The SA Report also appraised the key effects of the preferred policies and the strategy and identified mitigation measures, contingencies and risks associated with the strategy.

The SA Report was prepared to accompany the Core Strategy: Amendment to the Preferred Options for public consultation held between 21 May 2006 and 9 July 2007.

**3.3 Preparation of the SA Reports**

The SA Scoping Report that accompanied the Core Strategy Issues and Options document (Regulation 25) and the SA Report that accompanied the Core Strategy Preferred Options document (Regulation 26) were completed by Essex County Council’s Strategic Environmental Assessment team. These SAs drew on expertise available internally in Essex County Council and externally with existing partnership forums operating across the County.

This SA Report for the Core Strategy: Amendment to the Preferred Options, which repeats Regulation 26, was prepared in house by Colchester Borough
Council to better integrate with and inform the plan-making process associated with the Core Strategy.

3.4 Consultation

To include a broad range of views and fulfil SEA and PCPA 2004 consultation requirements Colchester Borough Council engaged a wide range of external and internal stakeholders at earlier stages of the Core Strategy process and in previous Sustainability Appraisals.

Consultation

The Sustainability Appraisal prepared for the Issues and Options stage and Preferred Options Stage of the emerging Core Strategy DPD was sent to all statutory consultees on Colchester’s LDF consultation list, as detailed in the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement. The document was also made available at Council offices, public libraries, the CBC website (www.colchester.gov.uk) and on request to any consultees who were then sent paper copies of the Issues and Options paper, the Preferred Options document and the accompanying SA Reports. The list of consultees has been set out in Appendix F.

Representations made during the consultations have been recorded and are publicly available on the council’s website. Responses received have also been used to amend policies and strategies in the Core Strategy.

3.5 Difficulties Encountered During the SA

Difficulties encountered during the plan-making process for the Core Strategy and the associated sustainability appraisal process, include:

- Limitations of information and incomplete data/evidence
• Changes to National Planning Policy and the Regional Spatial Strategy and incomplete guidance for Sustainability Appraisals and Core Strategies.

A key problem encountered related to the lack of complete information, evidence and data. New studies were commissioned for Employment, Retail, Housing Needs, Land Availability and Open Space. The information contained in these have been used to identify issues, development and assess options and inform the overall Core Strategy. The range of information, evidence and data employed in the SA has be listed in Appendices A and G.

A major problem encountered during the plan-making process for the Core Strategy and the associated sustainability appraisal process were changes and gaps in national and regional policy and guidance. The plan-making process for the Core Strategy began in 2004 and is ideally ‘frontloaded’, however national and regional policy is constantly evolving and often incomplete. The plan-making and SA process have therefore needed to be flexible and iterative, which has resulted in some inconsistencies between early stages and the later stages. It is considered more important to focus on achieving the best outcomes for the community rather than maintaining administrative consistency.
4. Context

4.1 Links to other Plans and Strategies

The new planning system requires the Core Strategy and the LDF to be consistent with national planning policy, the draft East of England Plan and the Community Strategy. All subsequent Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents in the LDF will also need to be in conformity with the Core Strategy. Accordingly, the Core Strategy Preferred Options document has been prepared in conformity with these policies and strategies.

National Planning Policy
The Core Strategy has been prepared in accordance with national planning policy. National planning policy is primarily set forth in Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) which is progressively being updated and issued as Planning Policy Statements (PPS). PPS 1 summarises six key principles of sustainable planning which this Core Strategy seeks to follow:

- Sustainable communities – Development plans should ensure that economic, social, and environmental objectives are achieved together over time
- Development plans should ensure that they contribute to global sustainability by addressing the causes and potential impacts of climate change
- Development plans need to take a spatial approach. This means that they need to integrate traditional land use planning policies with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they function;
- Planning policies should promote high quality inclusive design;
- Development plans should contain clear, comprehensive, and inclusive access policies
- Community involvement is an essential element of the planning process

Regional Planning
The draft East of England Plan (EEP) is the Regional Spatial Strategy for Colchester Borough and the LDF needs to be in general conformity with it. The draft EEP outlines a range of policies and targets relevant to spatial planning in Colchester. The most notable of these include:

- The need to provide 17,100 new houses and approximately 14,000 new jobs between 2001 and 2021.
- Identification of Colchester as a Regional Interchange Centre and a Major Regional Retail Centre.
- A need to identify Strategic Employment Sites in Colchester.

Colchester Borough has already allocated land to accommodate a large proportion of this growth; however there is also need to plan for this growth as part of the broader spatial planning approach taken by the Local Development
Framework. Therefore, we need to support housing development with sustainable transport, community facilities and attractive public spaces, and create vibrant mixed use centres to provide employment.

The Core Strategy is consistent with the draft East of England Plan and seeks to implement the policies and targets as they relate to Colchester Borough. Colchester, however, also has many unique spatial issues that are not identified in the draft East of England Plan that will be addressed by the Core Strategy.

Colchester Borough Council forms part of the Haven Gateway sub region, which has recently been recognised as a ‘Growth Point’. This special status will help deliver critical funding for vital infrastructure and development projects through a new long-term partnership between Colchester Borough, the Haven Gateway Partnership and the central Government department Communities and Local Government (CLG).

The Core Strategy is also consistent and supportive of the Regional Cities East (RCE) partnership. The RCE objectives for housing, prosperity, jobs and the environment can all be advanced through the Core Strategy and the LDF.

**Community Strategy**

The LDF provides the primary means of delivering the spatial elements of the Colchester Community Strategy, along with the elements of the County level Community Strategy, (Shaping the Future of Essex 2004-2024) that are relevant to Colchester. The Community Strategy was prepared by the public, private and community partners forming the Colchester Local Strategic Partnership to set a long-term Vision for the community of Colchester. The Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework share a commitment to the development of objectives through community consultation and stakeholder involvement.

Accordingly, the Core Strategy builds on the Strategy’s Vision for Colchester in 2020:

- **Our Vision is for Colchester to develop as a prestigious regional centre. Colchester will be a place where people, families, their communities and businesses thrive; where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their full potential.**
  - Colchester is going to be a centre of excellence and innovation for culture, education and learning, recognised regionally, nationally and internationally.
  - Colchester will become a preferred destination for visitors, for business location and for investment.
  - We will create a sustainable environment in which people will continue to enjoy high levels of health and well being, but with modern health and social care services for those who need them.
4.2 Social, Environmental and Economic Baseline Information

General characteristics
The Borough of Colchester is located in the county of Essex in the east of England and is situated 62 miles north east of London. The Borough covers an area of almost 125 square miles (34,540 hectares) and has the main town of Colchester surrounded by a rural hinterland with centres of population in the larger villages of Tiptree, West Mersea and Wivenhoe. These three prosperous and growing villages each have their own strong identity, aspirations and requirements. The remainder of the Borough is largely rural in character with a number of smaller villages and many small hamlets. The northern part of the Borough which borders with Suffolk lies within the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Data from the 2001 Census put the Borough population at approximately 158,900. Less than 4% of the population comprises ethnic minority groups, compared to slightly over 9% for England as a whole. Two-thirds of the total population is concentrated within the built-up areas of Colchester and Stanway.

Colchester’s population has seen a growth of 4.7% since mid-2001 to 163,400 in mid-2005. It accounts for 12.2% of the Essex County population and based on mid-2005 figures the average population density of Colchester was 497 people per square kilometre (sq km). This is an increase from 2001 when there were 329 people per sq km.

The population of Colchester is expected to grow by 13.3% (since mid-2004 population estimates) to 182,000 people in 2021. The largest growth will be in the older age groups (60+), whilst growth levels are expect to decline in the younger ages groups (aged 19 or younger). This means that by 2021, there will be an ‘ageing population’ in Colchester, which will affect many areas of the community for example, the economy, housing and health. The aging population is evidenced by the fact that 20.1% of Colchester’s population will be aged 65 or over in 2021. This will be an increase from the estimated 15.0% in mid-2004.

At 1st April 2006 there were approximately 69,893 households within the Borough of which 55,618 were privately owned. The average household size was 2.37 people per household in 2001 but it is estimated that this may have decreased in recent years.

An average of 901 homes was built between 1 April 2005 and 31 March 2006. Under current policies, 855 dwellings are expected to be built in the Borough each year. There has been an annual completion of 416 flats and 485 houses between 2005 and 2006 and 88 recorded affordable housing completions. During this same time period 93.7% of residential completions were located on previously developed land (brownfield sites), whilst 6.29% were on greenfield land. It was also recorded that 21.4% of new dwellings were completed at less than 30 dwellings per hectare, 52.0% of new dwellings were
completed at between 30 and 50 dwellings per hectare and 26.6% were completed at above 50 dwellings per hectare.

A national rise in house prices and improved commuter links to London have contributed to an increase in local house prices, out of line with local wage levels. Colchester’s mean house price of £188,737 in 2005 was below the Essex, Eastern and national averages. This average has increased from a mean of £65,926 in 1996. The Borough therefore has a significant and growing issue with the supply of housing that people can afford and research shows the need for more affordable housing within the Borough.

The Borough 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). Public transport provision includes six railway stations, bus routes operated by ten bus companies and several cycle trails including National Cycle Route One.

One of the biggest challenges to Colchester is traffic growth and the dominance of the car as the main mode of travel. The 2001 census indicated that 78.9% of households own one or more cars and vans and this figure is expected to have increased in recent years. The census also indicated that 61.1% of Colchester’s working-age population usually travelled to work by car or van, 13.0% usually travelled by public transport and a further 9.1% usually worked from home (working-age population includes full-time, part-time, self-employed and full-time students). Consequently, it is apparent that significant congestion can occur during peak times within Colchester, the A12 and on several of the minor roads to the south of the Borough.

**Economic characteristics**

The Borough is well connected to the strategic road and rail networks between London and East Anglia. Stansted Airport is close by in the District of Uttlesford. This strategic position has meant the Borough has been a magnet for growth resulting in a healthy and vibrant economy with the average gross household income estimated at £24,065 in 2002; above the national average of £22,500.

Colchester’s economy is dominated largely by the service sector accounting for an estimated 78.9% of jobs in 2001, with 11.3% in Manufacturing, 7.8% in Construction and the remainder in the primary sector (agriculture, fishing, energy and water). These figures illustrate Colchester’s move away from manufacturing and agriculture in recent years.

In April 2005, the Office for National Statistics estimated that Colchester had 388,000sqm of retail premises, 220,000sqm of office floorspace and 189,000sqm of commercial floorspace. The Borough also had 395,000sqm of factory floorspace and 335sqm of warehouse floorspace. In order to fulfil East of England 2021 targets, the Borough will need to provide a further 48,259sqm of retail floorspace in the town centre.
Employment targets for Colchester outline the likely employment change up to 2021 required to achieve the employment target in the East of England Plan. This illustrates the Borough’s need to take advantage of growth employment sectors and minimise employment loss in declining sectors. The data shows a continuing move towards the service industry (‘retail’ to gain 2,400 jobs and ‘hotels & catering’ to gain 2,300 jobs) and away from agriculture (loss of 500 jobs) and manufacturing (loss of 1,500 jobs).

Approximately two-thirds of the population aged 16-74 is economically active (78,200). Unemployment in the Borough is 1.5%, below both the Essex (1.6%) and national (2.8%) unemployment levels. Colchester’s main employment is the Garrison, which has close links with the town and there are sizeable educational facilities, including the University of Essex.

The Borough is relatively prosperous ranking 217 out of 354 districts on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (rank 1 being the most deprived). Although average earnings are lower than those in the rest of the East of England and Colchester has the third lowest wage levels compared to its “family group” of similar local authorities. 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. In 2003 the value of tourism to the economy was £175.3m. There were 5.1m visitor trips, made up of 42,000 trips by overseas staying visitors, 291,000 trips by domestic staying visitors and 4.8m by day-trippers. The number of jobs this creates is 4,589 (including part-time and seasonal) the majority are in the catering sector.

The Borough has recently begun 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, new army garrison, a visual arts facility and new community stadium.

**Environmental Characteristics**

Colchester has a rich and vast heritage. As Camulodunum, 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. There are 22 conservation areas, 1600 listed buildings (41 of these are Grade 1 listed buildings) and 40 Scheduled Monuments. There are 4 parks within Colchester on the National Register of Special Historic Interest including Colchester Castle Park, Severalls Hospital, Layer Marney Tower gardens and Wivenhoe Park.

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 and open water habitats. There is a substantial amount of coastline. 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.
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 the quality of life.

There are 2 Air Quality Management Areas in Colchester. These are located on Mersea Road and Brook Street.

Between 2005 and 2006, 18.78% of domestic waste was recycled and 11.32% had been composted. During this time period Colchester's AMR recorded 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, the average domestic consumption of electricity stood at 4,875 kWh and the daily domestic water use was recorded at 145 litres (per capita consumption).

Social Characteristics
Colchester is not a deprived area when measured against national statistics however four of its wards are in the most deprived 20% of wards in East of England. Three of these wards are in east Colchester, and include St Andrew's which is in the 10% most deprived wards nationally and has the highest levels of children living in poverty in Essex. According to the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 4.8% of small areas are classed as ‘seriously deprived.’ In addition, Colchester's Crime Audit reports 9.4 crimes per 1,000 residents between 2003 and 2004.

Life expectancy in the Borough has been estimated as nearly 78 years for men and approximately 82 years for women. There are 2 hospitals, 32 doctors and 26 dental surgeries within the Borough. In addition, there are 6 clinics, 15 opticians and 21 pharmacies.

There are 79 maintained schools: 64 primary, 11 secondary and 4 special schools. There are two further 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 is a significant issue for the Borough, with there being more demand than formal supply.

Educational achievement in the Borough is generally good. In 2001, 23.9% of Colchester’s working age population (16-59f/16-64m) were qualified to level 2 standard and 21.8% to level 4/5 (Level 2 qualifications cover: 5+‘O’ level passes; 5+ CSE (grade 1’s); 5+GCSEs (grades A-C); School Certificate; 1+‘A’ levels/AS’ levels; NVQ level 2; or Intermediate GNVQ. Level 4/5 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. This was below the Essex averages of 25.3% and 18.4% respectively).

The community has access to a wide range of council run services and facilities, with 31 parish councils. Facilities include country parks at Cudmore Grove, East Mersea and Highwoods, Colchester, a leisure centre (Leisure World) including swimming pools and a 12,000 capacity event venue, and four multi-activity centres.

4.3 Social, Environmental and Economic issues in Colchester

As part of the Sustainability Appraisal process it is necessary to identify the key sustainability issues that are facing the Borough. These issues have been identified from collection and analysis of the baseline data, evidence and consultation with stakeholders.

General Issues
It will be increasing important to match the population growth with economic growth within the Borough and as projections indicate an aging population the impact of smaller, older households on services and housing will need to be managed. Similarly, meeting the demand for affordable housing, including allocation of sites for gypsies and travellers, will also need to be considered and met.

It is also important to recognise and manage the other potential impacts that an aging population may have on the Colchester Community. These will include a greater stress on health services, on the local economy and on other key services such as retail, education, public transport, leisure and tourism. It is likely that many of these impacts can be positive if planned for and managed correctly.

If current car ownership and usage trends continue it will be important to prevent the creation of further dispersed growth patterns in Colchester that often result in high car dependency. In order to encourage a decrease in car usage, it will be important to develop an integrated, affordable public transport network, including fast and frequent bus services. Improving pedestrian and cycle provision will also help deliver this objective.

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

This may include reviving the rural economy which has been affected in recent years by falling incomes from farming, and as a significant part of the Borough is rural, there is a need to support the revitalisation of the rural economy including diversification schemes. Improving access in rural areas to jobs and services will significantly contribute to this aim.
The main urban areas of Colchester Borough provide the focus for local communities with the majority of facilities, services and activities being concentrated there. In order to ensure their improved vitality and viability a revitalisation programme is underway. Colchester’s Local Development Framework will provide the planning policy framework for the promotion of the revitalisation programme.

Improved transportation and attractive travel links are a major issue for Colchester, and it is essential that planning for transport is an integral part of the whole Local Development Framework, including the Core Strategy. It will be particularly important to improve and maintain Colchester’s transportation infrastructure so that the Borough can continue to attract businesses, retailers, tourists and home buyers, therefore boosting the local economy.

There are currently four major regeneration sites in the Borough, each of which should boost the economy. An additional regeneration area at North Station is proposed for inclusion in the Core Strategy to improve a key urban gateway. The tourist industry should also be much improved, especially with the opening of the Community Stadium towards the north of Colchester and the Firstsite Visual Arts Facility in the Town.

The provision of attractive, accessible and flexible business premises may also help generate new investment opportunities and encourage businesses to remain in Colchester.

**Environmental Issues**
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 current cultural and heritage assets as well as continuing to protect and enhance them. One key consideration will be the preservation of countryside areas and strategic green gaps between settlements. New development will also need to consistently achieve best practice in sustainable construction and design.

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 Marine Special Area of Conservation (SAC). New development has the potential to lead to the loss of habitat and species. This must be prevented where possible and mitigated in all other circumstances. Colchester’s Local Development Framework (LDF) will promote the reuse of land (i.e. development on brownfield sites) and require a density of development that makes the most efficient use of land. This will reduce the pressure for greenfield sites, where landscape and biodiversity value is greater. Brownfield sites however can sometimes also have ecological importance, as they may provide a refuge for species in an otherwise urban area.
Climate Change is a major issue that the whole LDF will need to consider. It is predicted that through climatic 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.

Colchester’s Core Strategy and related Development Policies and Supplementary Planning Documents have an important role to play in dealing with climate change. For example, encouraging planning that reduces the emissions of greenhouse gases and considering how to plan for dealing with the effects of Climate Change, for example increased incidents of flooding (promotion of Sustainable Drainage Systems), and more droughts in the summer (promotion of water efficiency techniques). The development of renewable sources of energy will also need to be encouraged throughout development, local businesses and local communities.

Connected to Climate Change are a whole collection of other related issues, which could compound the effects. For example water usage is increasing both through ongoing development and increased demand, and this coupled with drier summers could lead to sustained periods of restrictions on water supply. The inevitable increased rate of development will put further pressure on the water resources available in the Borough. Similarly 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.

Water quality is another important issue for the Borough. As a result of the Water Framework Directive there is a requirement for all inland and coastal waters to reach "good status" by 2015. In order to achieve this it is going to be important for issues such as sewerage infrastructure to be considered on all developments to ensure that the Boroughs watercourses are not adversely affected and improved.

Social Issues
The provision of housing to meet government targets and local needs is a major issue in Colchester. In planning this housing provision, it will need to be ensured that dwellings are located in areas that are not at risk to flooding.

For a number of reasons access to a variety of services and facilities can be an issue for Colchester residents. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation measure 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 very low. Despite this there are areas in the Borough where deprivation exists and which contrast with the surrounding more affluent areas. It is therefore important to encourage social inclusion through the design and build of new communities and to ensure adequate community infrastructure and services is available.

As Colchester is predominantly a rural area, rural isolation can also 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. Recent public consultation in the LDF has also highlighted the perceived need for villages to retain a sense of community and to avoid so-called ‘commuter-villages.’

In promoting healthy lifestyles, access to recreation, leisure and open space is as important as access to formal health facilities like hospitals, doctor’s surgeries and NHS dentists. An aging population will increase demands on health and social care, particularly the need for residential nursing care. However, 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 nursery establishments.

4.4 Limitations on Information

A wide range of information types and sources have been used during the ‘plan-making’ process and sustainability appraisal of the Core Strategy. The Council has used information sources (e.g. National Statistics) and consultation to identify issues, challenges, problems and opportunities in Colchester that need to be addressed and consequently set objectives for the Core Strategy to meet. To address these issues and achieve the objectives Colchester Borough Council has commissioned a range of studies to form a more robust evidence base for decision making. These studies include (not exclusively):

- Housing Land Availability Assessment
- Townscape Character Assessment
- Landscape Character Assessment
- North Essex Retail Study
- Hotel Market Demand Appraisal and Sequential Site Assessment
- Colchester Employment Land Review
- Haven Gateway Employment Land Study
- Housing Stock Information

The Borough Council’s resources are limited and it is not appropriate to commission a study in relation to every issue. Therefore this local evidence base has been supplemented by research undertaken at the national and regional level, and interpreted in light of the knowledge and experience of local residents and professionals.

Many of the issues addressed by the Core Strategy are broad, complex and abstract by nature and very difficult to quantify or measure objectively. Specific indicators and statistics can improve our understanding, but must be used cautiously as they can be misleading if interpreted in isolation of practical experience and other considerations. In cases where the local evidence base was incomplete in regard to important issues, it was considered appropriate for national and regional policy to be interpreted at the local level on the basis of the best available information, rather than to not address the issue at all.
In collecting the baseline data for the Sustainability Appraisal and the Annual Monitoring Review many different sources of information can and have been used. The ODPM draft consultation guidance, the 'Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks', highlights potentially useful data sources and data sets, as well as providing an indication of the geographical level at which baseline data should be collected. This guidance has been followed in regard to the baseline data collection.

One of the difficulties faced in collecting baseline data has been finding data at a Borough level. 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. Several pieces of baseline data have been gained from Census information, which was last collected in 2001. As a full Census is only conducted every ten years, some of this data is not particularly accurate as it is, or will be, out of date and cannot be monitored on a frequent basis. The case of aging data is also present for the Borough’s biodiversity indicators. However, where possible, more recent updates have been provided to try and counterbalance these limitations.

Several pieces of potential baseline data have been identified in Appendix A (linked to the indicators) as being useful for the Sustainability Appraisal process, in particular monitoring. However, as yet, no formal mechanism is in place to collect this data, and therefore none currently exists, but the Council will explore ways of gaining this data in the future. Some information has been collected through the compilation of Colchester’s Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), which has relied on manual data collection for the last two editions. From March 2007, the authority will be using ‘Flare’ a new software system to collate all planning application data. This should significantly increase the efficiency of our monitoring and therefore provide more accurate data for all subsequent sustainability appraisals.

The baseline data that has been collected for the purposes of this Sustainability Appraisal is shown in full in Appendix A of this report. The data is identified alongside each sustainability objective it has assisted in developing. If available, any trends in data have also been identified in this appendix.

4.5 Sustainability Appraisal Framework

The following table outlines the Sustainability Objectives and Assessment Criteria (sub-objectives) against which the policies, options and the strategy will be appraised. These objectives have been revised from the previous SA Reports to better integrate with the objectives of the Core Strategy. The table also identifies the indicators and evidence that relates to each Sustainability Objectives. These indicators and evidence will provide a basis for appraising how well an option/policy performs in achieving the objective.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and</td>
<td>- Will the delivery of affordable housing increase?</td>
<td>- Number of affordable homes completed annually</td>
<td>Housing Land Availability Assessment Housing Needs Study Housing Market Assessment Housing Topic Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affordable home.</td>
<td>- Will it deliver the number of houses needed to support the growing population?</td>
<td>- Number of dwellings built to EcoHomes standard</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will it deliver a range of housing to meet the diverse needs of the Borough?</td>
<td>- Number of households accepted as full homeless</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will it provide good quality and sustainable housing?</td>
<td>- Financial contributions towards affordable housing provision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will it reduce the risk of flooding?</td>
<td>- Number of key worker households delivered annually</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use</td>
<td>- Will it promote regeneration?</td>
<td>- Number of planning applications approved contrary to advice given by the EA on flood</td>
<td>Housing Land Availability Assessment Housing Topic Paper Strategic Flood Risk Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of land</td>
<td>- Will it reduce the need for development on greenfield land?</td>
<td>risk/flood defence grounds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will it provide people with good access to their needs?</td>
<td>- Number of applications resulting in the loss of community facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will the densities make efficient use of land?</td>
<td>- Properties at risk from flooding, as defined by the EA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will it reduce the risk of flooding?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy and improve the vitality</td>
<td>- Will it improve the delivery of employment to support the growing population?</td>
<td>- Number of applications resulting in new, extended or improved community facilities</td>
<td>Retail Study Haven Gateway Employment Land Study Employment Study (initial report) Employment Land Study Centres and Employment Topic Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of town centres</td>
<td>- Will it support the vitality and viability of town centres?</td>
<td>- Percentage of new residential development accessible to community facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will it provide peoples needs at accessible locations?</td>
<td>- Amount of leisure floorspace (Use Class D2) completed (gross)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will it help sustain the rural economy?</td>
<td>- Financial contributions towards leisure facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Number of new businesses setting up in the Borough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Percentage of employment floorspace (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8) on previously developed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>land (completed and occupied)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To achieve more sustainable travel behaviour and reduce the need to travel.</td>
<td>- Will it reduce the need to travel?</td>
<td>- Monetary investment in sustainable transport schemes, such as public transport facilities,</td>
<td>Local Transport Plan Transport Topic Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will the levels of sustainable travel increase?</td>
<td>cycleways, traffic calming measures and bus shelters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will it improve sustainable transport infrastructure and linkages?</td>
<td>- Proportion of journeys to work by public transport against the proportion of journeys to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will it reduce dependence on car travel?</td>
<td>work by car</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve the education, skills and health of the Borough’s population</td>
<td>- Will it provide equitable access to education, health, recreation and community</td>
<td>- Percentage of population of working age qualified to NVQ level 3 or equivalent</td>
<td>Community Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>facilities?</td>
<td>- Percentage of adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Percentage of new residential development accessible to community facilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To create safe and attractive public spaces and reduce crime.</td>
<td>- Will attractive and safe public spaces be created?</td>
<td>- Increase in areas of public open space</td>
<td>Urban Place Supplement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will actual crime be reduced?</td>
<td>- All crime – number of crimes per 1000 residents per annum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will the fear of crime be reduced?</td>
<td>- Number of Domestic Burglaries per 1000 households</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To conserve and enhance the townscape character, historic and cultural</td>
<td>- Will it enhance the historic and cultural assets of the Borough?</td>
<td>- Condition of Landscape Character Areas</td>
<td>Townscape Character Assessment Landscape Character Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assets of the District.</td>
<td>- Will it enhance the character and attractiveness of the Borough’s settlements?</td>
<td>- Buildings of Grade I and II and scheduled monuments at risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Number of new pieces of community art installed in the Borough</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To conserve and enhance the natural environment,</td>
<td>- Will it enhance the landscape character of the borough?</td>
<td>- Condition of internationally and nationally important wildlife and geological sites (SSSI, SPA, SAC &amp; Ramsar)</td>
<td>Landscape Character Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Will it enhance designated areas of the countryside and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37
| natural resources and the biodiversity of the District. | coastal environment?  
- Will it protect and improve biodiversity?  
- Will it improve environmental quality in terms of water air and soil quality? | Number and area of SNCl’s and LNR’s within the Borough  
- Area of ancient woodland within the Borough.  
- Change in priority habitats and species | Sustainability Topic Paper |
|---|---|---|---|
| To make efficient use of energy and resources, and reduce waste and greenhouse emissions. | - 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? | - Number of developments built to BREEAM /Ecohomes standards  
- Number of developments using reclaimed/recycled materials in construction  
- Percentage of electricity consumed that is generated from renewables  
- Domestic energy consumption per household  
- Percentage of domestic waste composted  
- Per capita consumption of water | --- |
5. Options

This chapter will consider the issues raised in Chapter 4 and appraise the sustainability of potential options. The process essentially involves 4 steps:

a) Outline the issues and relevant national policy, evidence and baseline information.

b) Set out the potential options for addressing the issues

c) Appraise these options against the sustainability objectives. The complete SA Tables are detailed in Appendix B and a summary of these tables are provided in the text below.

d) Analyse the outcomes of the sustainability appraisal and recommend a preferred option.

At first, in Section 5.1, the broad strategic issues and options will be considered to inform the overall Spatial Strategy. In Section 5.2, more specific policy options will be considered in relation to individual issues (e.g. Affordable Housing) and preferred options will be recommended.

5.1. Strategic Issues and Options

The following consideration of strategic issues and options provides an overview of issues addressed in more detail in relation to individual policy issues and options. This section is primarily concerned with the broader implications of strategic issues, but is heavily informed by the sustainability appraisal of the specific policy issues and options.

**Key Strategy Issues**

The most strategically significant issues for Colchester’s Core Strategy to address are the:

- location of new housing;
- location of new employment development; and
- key transport infrastructure/connections.

These three strategic issues have the most wide ranging implications for one another and other issues dealt with in the Core Strategy and the LDF. These issues and potential options have been considered in relation to individual policies, however these issues also need to be analysed at a strategic level in order to consider their wide ranging implications.

**Context (Policy and Evidence)**

The East of England Plan indicates that Colchester needs to accommodate 18,760 homes between 2001 and 2023, and approximately 14,200 jobs in the Borough between 2001 and 2021. Colchester Borough Council needs to plan for the sustainable delivery of housing and employment developments to achieve these regional targets. National Planning Policy requires the Borough Council to give priority to the redevelopment of previously developed land (PDL) and to established settlements and centres.
Strategic Options
At the broad strategic level there are different options for the location of housing, employment and key transport connections. These strategic options reflect the specific policy options, but also consider the implications for other strategic issues. If the majority of housing development was to be directed towards on location than, the transport and employment provision also need to relate to this location. Therefore, two main options have been developed to reflect different strategic directions for growth and change in the Borough of Colchester.

Option 1
This option emphasises the importance of the Town Centre and the regeneration of previously developed land. It directs 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. The majority of employment and economic development during the plan period will be focused on the Town Centre. The housing provision will be delivered in the following areas:
- Town Centre (2000)
- North Growth Area (6200)
- East Growth Area (2600)
- South Growth Area. (3000)
- Stanway Growth Area (1800)

This option identifies Tiptree, Wivenhoe and West Mersea as key district settlements accommodating about 1600 housing and providing shops and services for the surrounding rural hinterland.

This option will support the housing and employment development with sustainable transport infrastructure/connections (e.g. Transit Corridors) that will link the growth areas with the Town Centre, and provide Park and Ride and enhanced gateways for rural and regional residents.

Option 2
This option could allocate additional greenfield land to accommodate future housing, retail and business development, rather than seeking to regenerate previously developed land. This option would allow new economic and employment development to locate west of Stanway, to provide good access to the A12, rather than seeking to further regenerate the Town Centre. Additional greenfield land could be allocated to accommodate roughly 5000 homes around Stanway, and in villages such as Marks Tey and Tiptree.

This option for accommodating growth up to 2021 would involve substantial development along a western corridor from Colchester Town to Marks Tey. This housing and employment development would need to be supported by new transport infrastructure and connections. These locations do not have good access to the Town Centre or key public transport interchanges,
therefore significant investment in road infrastructure along this western corridor will be needed to accommodate this growth.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects**

Overall, the Sustainability Appraisal determined that strategic option 1 and the related policy options were more sustainable than the strategic option 2 and other alternative policies.

Option 1 will improve the vitality and viability of the Town Centre and promote the regeneration of established communities and rundown areas, including North Station, St Botolphs and East Colchester. This option will also promote more sustainable travel behaviour and minimise impacts on the countryside.

Strategic option 2 may improve the viability of delivering affordable housing and open space, by supporting greenfield development. However, option 2 would have more adverse impacts on the countryside, congestion and climate change, and would be less likely to improve accessibility, regeneration and built character. Option 2 would also be less likely to create a prestigious regional centre.

The Spatial Strategy outlined in Chapter 5 of the Core Strategy reflects the preferred strategic option discussed above and the preferred policy options outlined below.

**5.2 Appraisal of Policy Options**

The appraisal of the policy options are set out in spatial themes below and supported by sustainability appraisal of individual policy options in Appendix B.

**5.3 Sustainable Development**

The Sustainable Development Objectives in the Core Strategy are as follows:

- Direct development to sustainable locations to support existing communities, local businesses, sustainable transport and protect greenfield land.

- Provide the necessary infrastructure and facilities to support new and existing communities.

- Minimise the Borough’s greenhouse gas emissions and respond to the effects of climate change.

**Issues, Policy Context and Evidence**

Colchester needs to accommodate 18,760 homes between 2001 and 2023, and approximately 14,200 jobs in the Borough between 2001 and 2021. There are approximately 70,000 homes already in Colchester and 1.3 million square meters (National Statistics 2005) of bulk employment floorspace (including retail, offices, warehouses and industrial).
The Housing Land Availability Assessment\(^1\) identified theoretical capacity within established urban areas and previously developed land to accommodate 17,940 to 19,460 homes between 2001 and 2021. Between 2001 and 2006, 4,630 homes were completed at a rate of 930 per year. In 2006 there was planning permission for over 8,000 homes and 95% of these were on previously developed land.

The Core Strategy needs to ensure that the minimum housing provision can be delivered with confidence. The theoretical capacity identified in the HLAA can be supplemented with additional housing land, to provide greater confidence of housing delivery.

Overall the evidence base indicates that Colchester needs to accommodate the following development to deliver a large portion of the jobs needed to support growth:

- 67,400sqm of net internal retail floorspace 2006-2021\(^2\)
- 106,000sqm of gross office floorspace 2004-2021\(^3\)
- 45,000sqm of other gross business floorspace 2004 to 2021.\(^3\)

This development needs to be located sustainably to improve accessibility and reduce the need to travel. New communities also need to be supported by facilities and infrastructure.

Research carried out by the Countryside Agency (2002:26)\(^4\) indicates that the ‘expectation that the addition of housing development to larger rural settlements will maintain and enhance service and facility provision is not fulfilled. The maintenance of services and facilities appears, instead, to be dependent on a more complex range of local and non-local factors’. Further research by the Countryside Agency\(^5\) indicated that approximately 70% of residents of new housing developments in large rural settlements did not shop or work in the settlements. This figure rises to 100% in smaller villages. These concerns were echoed in the East of England Plan, which notes: ‘The growth of villages has been unable to halt the closure of village services and commuting has increased dramatically. Careful examination of how a settlement or groups of settlements function is required, as well as analysis of the service base, to determine the best solutions for each area.’ (Para 3.20)

The Essex Rural Strategy\(^6\) identified many of the non-local factors affecting Essex villages, including the following:

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\(^1\) Roger Tym & Partners, *Colchester Housing Land Availability Assessment*, February 2007
\(^3\) Lambert Smith Hampton, *Colchester Employment Land Review*, February 2007

Declining usage and rising thresholds of provision are removing basic services from villages

In Essex villages, 40% are without a post office, 67% lack a general store, 63% lack a pub and 79% without a doctor’s surgery. (Countryside Agency 2000)

The North Essex Authorities Retail Study revealed trends in shopping behaviour in towns, villages and rural areas. Overall it showed that regional centres dominated the shopping habits of large rural catchments. Most of the comparison and convenience retail expenditure throughout the Borough occurred in Colchester Town. Only Tiptree and West Mersea demonstrated a reasonable level of retail self-containment. The Retail Study also revealed that future retail growth would be heavily focused on Colchester Town and that retail provision elsewhere in the borough was unlikely to grow significantly.

Policy Options

Sustainable Development Locations

Option 1
Policy option 1 seeks to direct development towards accessible and previously developed locations, and encourage regeneration. The majority of housing and employment development is to be located in Colchester Town. Housing is primarily focused on regeneration areas, and some greenfield land is identified to accommodate about 3000 homes. Employment development is focused on the Town Centres and Strategic Employment Zones. The Settlement Hierarchy limits new housing development in principal and small villages, due to the limited provision of shops and services.

Option 2
This option would continue the development of established regeneration areas, but would allow substantial amounts of new development to occur at various greenfield locations amongst villages and on the urban fringe of Colchester Town. This option would allocate greenfield land with capacity for roughly 5000 homes, as well as new employment developments. This development could be located to the west of Colchester Town, between Stanway and Marks Tey, and amongst various villages.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would actively enhance the Town Centre and key Gateways (e.g. North Station) and therefore help to develop a prestigious regional centre. Option 2 would not optimise the opportunities to regenerate existing communities or direct development towards sustainable locations. Option 2 would also have adverse implications for climate change and the countryside.

GVA Grimley, North Essex Authorities Retail Study, 2006
Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option 1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alternative A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

Supporting Communities with Facilities and Infrastructure

Option 1
Policy option 1 seeks to ensure that development reviews community needs and provide the necessary facilities and infrastructure arising from the proposal. Planning obligations will continue to be used, but standard charges will be employed where appropriate to help deliver strategic projects. The viability of developments will be considered when determining development contributions.

Option 2
This option focuses on a site-by-site approach to planning obligations, and does not employ standard charges to fund strategic infrastructure.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would better support sustainable communities with the necessary infrastructure and facilities. Option 2 limits the Council’s ability to source funding for strategic facilities and infrastructure and may not secure contributions from smaller developments.

Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Option 1</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alternative A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

5.4 Centres and Employment Policies

The Centre and Employment Objectives in the Core Strategy are as follows:
- Create a prestigious regional centre and a vibrant network of district and local centres that stimulate economic activity and provide residents’ needs at highly accessible locations.
- Facilitate the provision of quality jobs to support the prosperity of our growing community.

Issues, Policy Context and Evidence
The East of England Plan requires Colchester to provide approximately 14,200 jobs between 2001 and 2021 to support the growing population and economy.
There is approximately 1.3 million square meters of bulk employment floorspace (including retail, offices, warehouses and industrial).\(^8\)

The Haven Gateway Employment Study\(^9\) considered that 14,200 jobs could be provided in Colchester in the following employment sectors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Sector</th>
<th>Employment change needed to achieve EEP target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>- 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>- 1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity gas and water</td>
<td>- 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>+ 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
<td>+ 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>+ 2400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels and catering</td>
<td>+ 2300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport and communication</td>
<td>+ 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking, finance and other business services</td>
<td>+ 3500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public admin &amp; defence</td>
<td>- 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Education</td>
<td>+ 5300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other services</td>
<td>+ 1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>+ 14,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Study calculated that business development (including offices, warehousing and industry etc) could provide roughly 5000 jobs. Assuming that business development would be located on ‘employment land’, the Study projected that an overall net requirement for 5.1ha (17.3ha gross) of employment land over the plan period.

The Study recommended that 34.6ha of land be made available for business development over the plan period. This recommendation comprises 17.3ha of gross requirement, plus 50% to account for variations in density and another 50% to account for variations in quality. The gross figure is employed rather than the net figure because declining manufacturing land may be redeveloped for housing and mixed use development. In 2005, the Borough had a surplus of 96.8 hectares of employment land, indicating that a surplus of 62.2ha could remain at the end of the plan period.

The Colchester Employment Land Review\(^{10}\) considered that approximately 151,000sqm of gross business development (90,000sqm net) could occur between 2004 and 2021. The review indicated that this development could provide 5,687 jobs in Colchester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Land Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(^8\) Office of National Statistics, 2005

\(^9\) Haven Gateway Partnership, Employment Land Study Final Report, December 2005

\(^{10}\) Lambert Smith Hampton, Colchester Employment Land Review, February 2007
Assuming relatively low floorspace to site area ratios of 6:10 for offices and 4:10 for other business developments, this requirement equates to a net land requirement of 14.2ha (28.9ha). Office development in accessible locations, such as the Town Centre, would be expected to use land more efficiently and achieve plot ratios over 1:1. Achieving more efficient office development would reduce the land requirement by at least 7 hectares.

The North Essex Authorities Retail Study 2006 investigated growth in consumer expenditure within the catchment of Colchester’s town centres, and calculated the corresponding demand for net internal retail floorspace. The Retail Study forecast demand for approximately 7,676sqm of convenience floorspace and 59,220sqm metres of comparison retail in Colchester Town between 2006 and 2021. The Retail Study also identified demand for some modest retail growth in Tiptree, West Mersea and Wivenhoe during this period.

Overall the evidence base indicates that Colchester needs to accommodate the following development to deliver a large portion of the jobs needed to support growth:
- 67,400 sqm of net internal retail floorspace 2006-2021
- 106,000sqm of gross office floorspace 2004-2021
- 45,000sqm of other gross business floorspace 2004 to 2021.

### Table: B-Use Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B-Use Class</th>
<th>New Floor space Required (sq.m)</th>
<th>Vacated Floor space (sq.m)</th>
<th>Plot ratio</th>
<th>New land required (ha)</th>
<th>Land vacated (ha)</th>
<th>Net land (ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office (B1a &amp; B1b)</td>
<td>105,818</td>
<td>9,325</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>-1.5</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factories (B1c, B2 &amp; Sui Generis)</td>
<td>19,593</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>-13.2</td>
<td>-8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warehousing (B8)</td>
<td>25,565</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>150,977</td>
<td>-62,164</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>-14.7</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table: Convenience Retail (Net) vs Comparison Retail (Net)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Convenience Retail (Net)</th>
<th>Comparison Retail (Net)</th>
<th>Total Retail (Net)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colchester Town</td>
<td>7,676</td>
<td>59,220</td>
<td>66,896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiptree</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Mersea</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wivenhoe</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colchester Borough</td>
<td>7,796</td>
<td>59,643</td>
<td>67,439</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some recent developments and approvals will already seek to satisfy these requirements, including the University Research Park (outline planning permission for 37,000sqm of gross office/business floorspace) and the Vineyard Gate Shopping Centre proposal (approximately 50,000sqm of gross retail floorspace proposed).

The evidence indicates that there is sufficient ‘employment land’ currently available to accommodate projected growth, with a potential surplus of roughly 62ha. There are a range of other issues that needed to be considered however:

- PPS6: Planning for Town Centres identifies retail and office development as main Town Centre uses that should be located in the Town Centre or adjoining the Town Centre.
- National policy requires the efficient use of land and gives priority to the regeneration of previously developed land.
- Some existing land currently used for industry etc is likely to be redeveloped for housing and mixed use development (e.g. East Colchester). This will form part of the 13ha of projected decline in land used for manufacturing.
- Some of the surplus ‘employment land’ could be made available for housing or mixed used development during the plans period.

Policy Options

Centre and Employment Hierarchy

Option 1
Policy option 1 seeks to focus new employment development and economic growth at accessible locations and previously developed land. It sets forth a hierarchy for employment development that coordinates the use and scale of developments with the accessibility and role of different areas. This option directs the majority of new employment development towards the Town Centre, Urban Gateways (e.g. North Station), and Strategic Employment Zones (e.g. University Research Park). Centres are intended to support a wide range of developments including office and retail that are compatible with mixed use environments, whilst Employment Zones are intended to accommodate other employment developments that are less suited to centres.

Option 2
This alternative option would maintain the current land uses and allocate more land for new employment development at less accessible, greenfield locations. This option would not focus new development on the Town Centre and would not actively promote regeneration.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
Both policy options will accommodate employment developments and economic growth to provide over 14,200 jobs for the growing population. The
Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would offer more flexibility to manage change, support mixed use development and reduce the need to travel. Option 2 would allow most new development to locate at edge of town locations which would reduce accessibility and have adverse implications for the Town Centre and the countryside.

Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
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<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Preferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alternative A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ = The options that best achieves the objective

Mixed Use Centres

Option 1
Policy option 1 focuses retail, office and mixed use developments on the Town Centre and Urban Gateways, which are the most accessible locations in the Borough. This option supports smaller scale development in District Centres and Neighbourhood Centres to provide for the needs of local communities.

Option 2
This policy option would allow for further retail development at out-of-centre locations. This option would not seek to correlate development scale with the accessibility of a location. Development at out-of-centre locations would be largely dependent on car access and would compete with the Town Centre.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would support the important role of the Town Centre and help create a prestigious regional centre. Policy option 1 will focus this growth on the Town Centre and encourage regeneration in accordance with PPS6: Planning for Town Centres. New economic opportunities in the Town Centre are more accessible to a wider range of potential employees, customers and visitors and promote sustainable travel. There is capacity to accommodate new retail, office and mixed use development within established centres (e.g. the North Station / Cowdray Avenue area) that can be realised through regeneration.

Option 2 was considered to have adverse implications for the vitality of the Town Centre and for sustainable travel behaviour. Out-of-centre retail parks and office parks exacerbate the reliance on car travel and undermine the regeneration of more accessible locations, such as the Town Centre and North Station.

Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment Zones

Option 1
Policy option 1 outlines the role of the Strategic Employment Zones and Local Employment Zones to accommodate industry, warehousing and business developments. This option will focus most new business development in the Strategic Employment Zones, which offer good access to strategic roads and minimise adverse impacts on residential areas. This option seeks to further enhance Strategic Employment Zones with infrastructure improvements.

Option 2
The alternative option would allow a wider range of land uses to be located in Employment Zones, including more retail and offices developments. This option would need to allocate additional land to accommodate displaced business development. This additional land would be primarily located to the west of Stanway.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
Both policy options will accommodate employment developments and economic growth to provide over 14,200 jobs for the growing population. There is sufficient land currently available to accommodate new employment development and economic growth during the plan period. There is also significant regeneration potential on previously developed land.

The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would support the regeneration of the Town Centre and Urban Gateways and also help improve accessibility. Option 1 would also ensure that industry, warehouse and business developments could locate at high quality sites with good access to strategic roads. Option 2 would involve more development at greenfield locations that are reliant on car access. Option 2 could create conflicts between different land uses and the spread of employment developments would undermine the role of the Town Centre.

Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Option 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

5.5 Housing

The Housing Objectives in the Core Strategy are as follows:

- Provide decent and affordable housing at accessible locations to accommodate our growing community.
• Provide a range of housing options to meet the diverse needs of the whole community.

Issues, Policy Context and Evidence

East of England Plan
The proposed changes to the East of England Plan (EEP)\textsuperscript{11} set out the following housing delivery targets for Colchester and clarified that these were minimum requirements:
• 2001 to 2021 => 17,100 min
• 2006 to 2021 => 12,470 min

The EEP also identified a minimum Annual Average Completion Rate for Colchester of 830. The EEP states that LPAs should aim to exceed this completion rate if additional housing can be delivered without breaching environmental limits and infrastructure constraints, by:
• increasing density (consistent with PPS3)
• encouraging opportunities on previously developed land
• delivering affordable housing on rural exception sites

The EEP also requires LPAs to plan for the continuous delivery of housing for at least 15 years the date of adoption. Therefore, Colchester BC needs to plan for the delivery of the following minimum housing targets:
• 2001 to 2023 => 18,760 min
• 2006 to 2023 => 14,130 min

Other key implications of the EEP on housing include:
• Policy SS2: Overall Spatial Strategy sets a regional target of 60% of all development to be on previously developed land.
• Policy H3 raises the regional expectation for affordable housing to 35% of housing delivery.

Housing Delivery
Colchester Borough currently has about 70,000 households. Between 2001 and 2006, 4,630 homes were completed at a rate of 930 per year\textsuperscript{5}. In 2006 there was planning permission for over 8,000 homes and approximately 94% of these were on previously developed land\textsuperscript{12}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colchester Town</td>
<td>3,450</td>
<td>7,716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiptree</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Mersea</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wivenhoe &amp; Rowhedge</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marks Tey</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{12} Colchester Borough Council, 2006
The Housing Land Availability Assessment\textsuperscript{13} identified capacity within established urban areas and previously developed land to accommodate 17,940 to 19,460 homes during the 2001 to 2021 period. This provides an overall theoretical capacity for the borough which comprises the following categories:

- Completions
- Permissions
- Regeneration areas
- Existing allocations
- Small site windfall
- Windfall on employment land
- Other windfall

The Core Strategy needs to set out a minimum housing provision for Colchester that can be achieved with confidence. Therefore the default scenario, which indicates capacity of 17,940, is a more appropriate basis to determine the minimum provision. The LDF also needs to identify key sites that should be provided for housing in order to secure this minimum provision. Windfall on employment sites and other windfall are therefore discounted from the capacity identified in the HLAA because it is the role of the LDF to identify and manage the development of key sites with housing potential.

PPS3: Housing also indicates that extant permissions should not be included in housing provision. The reasons for this are unclear, but given that Colchester has over 8,000 permissions, it would be highly inappropriate to simply discount them. There is reasonable confidence that majority of these permissions will be constructed. Key permissions, including the Garrison and Severall’s Hospital, are progressing soundly and we can be relatively confident that they will be delivered during the plan period. During the last 4 years, housing delivery in Colchester has exceeded 900 homes per year and is projected to continue to exceed the requirements of the East of England Plan through out the plan period.

The revised housing capacity from the HLAA is therefore 17,016, including completions, permission, regeneration areas, existing allocations and small site windfall. To ensure that the minimum housing provision can be delivered with confidence, it was assumed that 10\% of this capacity would not be realised.

Interpreting the HLAA for LDF purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>HLAA Revised Total – Including completions, permissions, regen areas, existing allocations and small site windfall.</th>
<th>Conservative Assumption (-10%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colchester</td>
<td>14,608</td>
<td>13,147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{13} Colchester Housing Land Availability Assessment (2007) Roger Tym & Partners
The LDF therefore needs to identify additional provision of around 3,500 to ensure that over 18,760 homes are delivered between 2001 and 2023. This provision needs to be sustainably located, and supported by facilities and infrastructure.

**Diversity and Affordability**

In 2001, the average household size was 2.37 persons\(^{14}\). Approximately 28% were single person households, roughly 35% were 2 person households, and another 29% of households had dependent children. In 2021, the average household size is projected to shrink to around 2.24 persons, and single person households are likely to grow to about 35% of the total.

### Household Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Person</th>
<th>All Pensioner</th>
<th>Cohabiting Couple</th>
<th>Married Couple</th>
<th>Lone Parent</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001 (%)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2001, flats and maisonettes represented about 15% of total housing and probably occupied less than 5% of housing land. Between 2000 and 2006, about 31% of new dwellings were flats and maisonettes, whilst 69% were houses or bungalows. In 2006, flats and maisonettes represented about 17% of total housing stock. Although more flats and maisonettes have been constructed in recent years the overall proportion is still relatively low.

### Housing Delivery

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Houses</th>
<th>Flats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2 Bed</td>
<td>3 Bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2006</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the other hand, houses with 3 or more bedrooms represented 57% of total completions, whilst 2 bedroom houses represented only 12%\(^{15}\). Given that the average price for a new build 3 bed house is about £300,000, there is concern that the mix of housing is not reflecting community need.

In 2002, the average income in Colchester was £24,065. In 2006, the average house price was roughly £192,000, although the average price of a new build home would be significantly higher.\(^{16}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colchester</th>
<th>1 Bed</th>
<th>2 Bed</th>
<th>3 Bed</th>
<th>4 Bed</th>
<th>+5 Bed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

\(^{14}\) Office for National Statistics, Census 2001, Crown Copyright 2007  
\(^{15}\) Colchester Borough Council, 2006  
The Colchester Housing Needs Survey (2002)\(^\text{17}\) projected a need for 551 new affordable housing units per year, which if unchanged would represent about 66\% of total housing provision required by the East of England Plan. The Council is currently undertaking a new Housing Needs Survey and Housing Market Assessment, and given the rising property prices the need for affordable housing is likely to have increased.

**Landscape Character**

The Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)\(^\text{18}\) by Chris Blandford Associates reviewed Colchester’s countryside to identify distinct areas of landscape character and overall landscape value. The LCA reviewed existing countryside conservation areas and identified areas of low, moderate, high and highest landscape conservation importance. Areas of very high conservation importance are concentrated around Mersea Island and Dedham Vale is an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Areas of low landscape conservation importance are located to the south and west of Stanway and to the east of Wivenhoe. Large scale development would not be suitable in areas of high or very high landscape conservation importance, whilst planning for development in areas of low or moderate landscape conservation importance should seek to minimise landscape impacts and make enhancements to the countryside where appropriate.

**Flood Risk**

Areas at risk of flooding are mostly concentrated along the Colne River and coastal areas. Built up areas that are currently at risk of flooding include West Mersea, Rowhedge, Wivenhoe, the Hythe, and areas in the Town Centre, including Westway, North Station Road and Cowdray Avenue. A tidal flood barrier to the south of Rowhedge and Wivenhoe protects most settlements in Colchester from coastal flooding.

Colchester Borough Council is currently undertaking a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which will involve detailed analysis of areas at risk of flooding and will help inform local design solutions.

**Policy Options**

**Housing Delivery**

**Option 1**

\(^{17}\) Colchester Borough Council, *Colchester Housing Needs Survey, 2002*

\(^{18}\) Chris Blandford Associates, *Colchester Landscape Character Assessment, November 2005*
Policy option 1 will deliver approximately 19,000 homes between 2001 and 2023 in the Town Centre and four Growth Areas in Colchester Town, including sustainable urban extensions to the north and south-west. Housing development will take a sequential approach that gives priority to accessible and previously developed land (PDL), with the aim of providing over 80% of housing on PDL.

**Option 2**
This option will also focus this housing delivery on Colchester Town, but will develop urban extensions at alternative locations to the south of Colchester and to the west of Stanway.

**Option 3**
This option involves the creation of a new settlement at Marks Tey. Establishing a new settlement requires substantial investment and this option would involve the development of 3000-5000 homes. This option would not involve any urban extensions to Colchester Town and less development in regeneration areas.

**Option 4**
This option directs new housing development towards the district settlements and other villages in the Borough. Significant amounts of new development would be delivered through extensions to rural settlements. This option would not involve any urban extensions to Colchester Town and less development in regeneration areas.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects**
The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 was the most sustainable option in regard to delivering regeneration and optimising accessibility. Option 1 provides a range of housing opportunities that provide people with good access to there needs and minimise the need to travel.

Option 2 involved a similar approach to option 1 however an urban extension to the south of town could impact upon areas of conservation and archaeological, whilst an extension to the west of Stanway provides only moderate access to the town centre and public transport interchanges.

Option 3 would direct investment and development towards Marks Tey rather than the regeneration areas and the Town Centre. Allocating 3000-5000 homes at Marks Tey would be unlikely to deliver a sustainable new settlement. This location provides access to the A12 and regional train services, however Marks Tey does not have good access to shops, employment and services. This level of development would not deliver the necessary infrastructure improvements and community facilities, and would not create the economies of scale to provide significant local shopping, employment opportunities and services. It is likely that residents would continue to commute to Colchester Town for the majority of their needs. Although Marks Tey train station provides sustainable travel opportunities to
some destinations, residents would be heavily reliant on car travel to access most destinations.

Option 4 would disperse development towards predominantly greenfield locations with relatively low access to shops, employment and services. It would be difficult to support these new communities with the necessary facilities and infrastructure. These new developments are also likely to have an adverse impact on the countryside and landscape character.

### Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Alternative C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

### Housing Density

**Option 1**
Policy option 1 provides guidance on the appropriate densities for new development that relate to the accessibility of a location. In general, higher densities (e.g. 75 du/ha) are suited to highly accessible locations like the Town Centre, whilst lower densities (e.g. 40 du/ha) are suited to rural settlements which have low accessibility. It requires new development to be informed by local context and to enhance local character.

**Option 2**
This option involves development at higher densities (over 75 du/ha), irrespective of the accessibility of the location. This approach would deliver more development on accessible town centre locations and reduce the demand for greenfield sites.

**Option 3**
This option would limit development to low densities (30-50 du/pa) irrespective of the accessibility of the location. This approach would involve less development within settlements and would require additional development of greenfield land.

### Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects

The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would make efficient use of land and optimise accessibility, whilst minimising impacts on the character of settlements. Option 1 would also support the regeneration of rundown areas and the viability of the Town Centre.

The higher densities proposed by Option 2 would conflict with local built character in some areas and are unlikely to be adequately supported by open
space and sustainable transport. At present travel behaviour and the public realm are heavily influenced by the private car. Higher densities are unlikely to succeed in locations that do not provide the attractions of people-friendly streets and excellent public transport.

The lower densities in Option 3 would reduce the impacts on local character and reduce pressure on local parking issues; however the resulting spread of development would have adverse implications for sustainability. Lower densities would result in additional development of greenfield land, which would undermine regeneration and encourage unsustainable travel behaviour. Increased dependence on private cars would also result in more car traffic and more pressure for out-of-centre employment and retail development.

Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

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<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
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Housing Diversity

Option 1
Policy option 1 aims to address the need to provide a range of housing types and tenures to meet identified needs and create inclusive and sustainable communities. The policy indicates a broad mix of housing types which would then be refined by an appraisal of community context and housing need.

Option 2
This option would allow provision to be determined by market demand which would result in greater flexibility of delivery, but would not be tied to community need.

Option 3
This option would be to prescribe strict targets for the required mix of housing based on regularly updated assessments of demographics and community need.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would help provide a more diverse mix of housing to meet community needs, whilst avoiding an overly prescriptive approach. Option 2 would optimise housing delivery and viability, but the evidence indicates that this approach can fail to meet a diverse range of housing needs, and would not adequately create mixed communities. Option 3 will provide a diverse mix of housing, however it is unlikely to adequately respond to the dynamics and intricacies of the housing market and this could inhibit choice for some home owners and the viability of developments for homebuilders.
### Affordable Housing

**Option 1**
Policy option 1 commits the council to securing 35% of new dwellings to be provided as affordable housing on developments of 10 or more dwellings, except for rural villages where the threshold is 3 or more dwellings.

**Option 2**
A lower affordable housing requirement of 30% with a threshold of 15 dwellings would increase the viability of development and the delivery of infrastructure but would deliver less affordable housing.

**Option 3**
This option involves a higher affordable housing target of 40% with a 0 threshold, which would deliver more affordable housing units per development but would reduce viability and the delivery of other forms of planning gain.

### Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would increase the delivery of affordable housing and help create mixed communities, whilst not undermining the viability of delivering the minimum housing provision. Option 1 also reflects the regional policy target outlined in the East of England Plan, and therefore seeks a consistent approach with neighbouring Local Authorities.

Option 2 would deliver more affordable housing than is currently achieved, but may secure less units than option 1. Option 2 may however improve the viability of small regeneration developments.

Option 4 would deliver more affordable housing, but would reduce the viability of development and the delivery of associated community facilities and infrastructure. The Sustainability Appraisal indicated that this option for affordable housing may adversely affect the Borough’s regeneration outcomes.

The sustainability and viability of these affordable housing options will be further tested through the Housing Market Assessment. The broad issues discussed above will remain valid, but the outcomes of the Housing Market Assessment will help refine the policy prior to submission.

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### Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

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### Gypsy and Travellers

**Option 1**

Policy option 1 identifies a site to meet gypsy and traveller need at Severalls Lane and provides that additional sites for gypsy and travellers will be identified in the Site Allocations DPD to meet future need.

**Option 2**

This option does not seek to provide specific new sites for authorised gypsy and traveller encampments.

### Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects

The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would help meet diverse housing needs and create inclusive mixed communities. Option 2 would likely result in unauthorised encampments, which could lead to local conflicts.

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### 5.6 Community Facilities

The Community Facilities Objectives in the Core Strategy are as follows:

- Provide excellent and accessible health, education, culture and leisure facilities to meet the needs of Colchester’s growing community.
- Promote active and healthy lifestyles and strive for excellence in education and culture.

### Issues, Policy Context and Evidence

The housing growth identified for Colchester through the East of England Plan will drive the need for enhanced community facilities provision. The Haven Gateway study by Roger Tym estimates that the dwelling increase of 17,100 will translate into a population increase of 23,953 during the period 2001-2021\(^\text{19}\). This relatively low number is a function of the fall in household size. Additionally, there is scope for provision to be enhanced to meet existing

\(^{19}\) Roger Tym and Partners, *Haven Gateway Strategic Residential and Infrastructure Study*, November 2005

58
needs and expectations, and growth in particular locations and for particular sections of the population, such as the elderly, will create further demand.

The Schools Organisation Plan to 2010 identifies the need for further primary school places to be provided by developers in the regeneration areas and in Stanway, while excess capacity is an issue for rural areas. Demand for secondary school places is not evenly spread, although overall capacity is forecast to be adequate to 2010\(^{20}\). Over the longer term, further secondary provision will be needed in north Colchester to supplement provision in the one existing school. 6,000 dwellings are considered necessary to support a viable new secondary school, so this large step change in provision creates problems for the phasing and delivery of a new school. It may be necessary to allocate and begin to deliver a secondary school well in advance of need, but finding funds to front-load development of a school that wouldn’t be operating at full capacity for a while would be difficult.

Patterns of health care are now changing so that more services are being provided at local level rather than in hospitals. The general need for acute capacity identified by the NHS for the East of England\(^{21}\) will accordingly need to be catered for by both expanded hospital facilities and by community-based local services. A specific issue for Colchester is the relocation of services and staff to the General Hospital from the outmoded facilities at Essex County Hospital. Participants in the 2005 Rural Facilities Workshop highlighted doctors’ surgeries as the top priority for better provision in their area. The trend to community-based local services should increase the viability of doctor’s surgeries in the larger villages.

Colchester is currently served by a large multi-activity leisure centre including pools and events venue as well as four multi-activity specialist centres spread geographically in the borough. Expansion of sporting/leisure facilities is programmed into current regeneration area programmes. It includes both strategic facilities such as the Community Stadium in North Colchester noted above, and facilities with a more local catchment area such as the new swimming pool and spectator sports venue at the Garrison adjacent to the Town Centre.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal for the Preferred Options stage contains further baseline information relative to the need for community facilities including data on population, education and employment, deprivation, crime and cultural heritage\(^{22}\).

**Policy Options**

**Community Facilities**

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\(^{22}\) Essex County Council, *Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal of Colchester Core Strategy Preferred Options*, November 2006
Option 1
Policy option 1 commits the Council to working with partners to deliver strategic community projects to support the Community Strategy and to develop Colchester as a prestigious regional centre. It requires new development to contribute towards the provision of community facilities and supports the retention and enhancement of existing community facilities.

Option 2
This option places less emphasis on delivering strategic community projects and securing new community facilities at accessible locations.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of the policy options (Appendix B) determined that Option 1 would support regeneration and the provision of centrally located community facilities to support growth. Option 2 would also provide increased levels of community facilities but would result in a more dispersed pattern of delivery that would provide less widely accessible facilities.

Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

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5.7 Urban Renaissance

The Urban Renaissance Objectives in the Core Strategy are as follows:
- Revitalise rundown areas and create new inclusive high quality and sustainable communities.
- Promote high quality design and sustain Colchester’s historic buildings and features.

Issues, Policy Context and Evidence

Regeneration

Regeneration of urban areas is a key element of the general planning principles set forth in PPS1 and Sustainable Communities: Homes for All. Support for high quality sustainable design is enshrined in those documents and is also highlighted in PPS3 (Housing) and Building a Greener Future. Policy SS5 in the East of England Plan identifies priority areas for regeneration in the eastern region, including Colchester.

Regeneration in Colchester is based on identification of the unique characteristics of each area, development of area specific master plans and implementation through partnership working. Four of the areas, East Colchester, St. Botolph’s, North Colchester and the Garrison, were identified through the earlier Local Plan process, while the North Station Urban...
Gateway area has been identified as a priority area for regeneration by the Local Strategic Partnership (Colchester 2020). The inclusion of an additional area in a key Urban Gateway with links to all the other regeneration areas is meant to improve not only the area’s physical and social environment, but is also intended to contribute to the synergistic benefits of the overall regeneration program. The synergistic benefits of improved transport links to the Town Centre and beyond and development of a portfolio of unique attractive areas will contribute to the overall goal of developing Colchester as a prestigious regional centre. The table below summarises the character of each area and the relevant plan for its development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Description and Townscape Character Designation</th>
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<tr>
<td>St. Botolphs</td>
<td>Town Centre – Historic Core</td>
<td>Masterplan Planning Guidance 2005</td>
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<td>East Colchester</td>
<td>Former port- 20th C. commerce, Mixed age suburbs, Urban greenspace</td>
<td>Colne Harbour Draft Master Plan SPG May 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Colchester</td>
<td>Former Severalls Hospital site and adjacent greenfield land – Edwardian suburbs, Mixed age suburbs, urban greenspace</td>
<td>Severalls and Cuckoo Farm Master Plan</td>
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<td>Army Garrison site adjacent to Town Centre - Garrison</td>
<td>Garrison Master Plan Nov 2002</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Station/Cowdray Ave.</td>
<td>Railway station and business uses – North Station</td>
<td>Area Action Plan required</td>
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**High Quality Urban Design**

Policy UR2 follows on from a clear requirement at national level to ensure high-quality sustainable design. PPS 1 states that good design, including consideration of access issues, is crucial to the delivery of sustainable development, not separate from it. PPS12 provides that ‘in preparing local development documents, local planning authorities must include policies on design and access’, while further guidance and good practice is provided in ‘By Design’.

A pro-active policy approach to good design is accordingly clearly mandated. Advice commissioned by CABE notes that: ‘The aim for planning authorities should be to move beyond partial, ad hoc and inconsistent approaches to design policy, towards more considered, comprehensive and character-based approaches established on the basis of professional and public consensus.’

Policy UR2, in conjunction with the more detailed development control policies to follow, is intended to support this approach. It also is compatible with the design philosophy set forth in the Essex Design Guide and Urban Place Supplement, in particular the use of context appraisals ‘that leads to greater

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24 Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), *Spatial planning by design*, July 2005
appreciation of needs, aspirations and opportunities that exist within the local context.  

Colchester’s image as ‘Britain’s Oldest Recorded Town’ where the historic heritage is valued and conserved has been an important part of its identity for residents and visitors. The Townscape Character Assessments (June 2006) commissioned by the Borough have established the unique historic and architectural characteristics of each distinct urban area and these will inform future context appraisals for new development. The challenge now is to successfully integrate the historic built fabric with innovative and sustainable contemporary design that respects the surrounding context. This is a matter of ensuring new development is compatible with the scale, grain and massing of the surrounding streets and buildings rather than relying on the replication of historic design styles.

Policy options

Regeneration

Option 1
Policy option 1 provides for the enhancement of Colchester as a prestigious regional centre through regeneration in four areas previously targeted for regeneration, St. Botolphs, East Colchester, North Colchester, and the Garrison, and one new area - North Station. These areas will then be linked to the Town Centre and other areas through improved transport links.

Option 2
This option would continue to work on established regeneration areas without delivering additional transport infrastructure and without seeking to regenerate the North Station area.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects

Both policy options address the objectives of regeneration of strategic town centre areas and reuse of brownfield land. The Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix B) determined however that Option 1 provides for a greater combined impact through the addition of a new area and by coordinating the provision of transport and infrastructure to serve all the regeneration areas. Transport improvements are given less priority in option 2 and are accordingly less supportive of sustainable travel objectives.

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Built Design and Character

**Option 1**
Policy option 1 provides for securing high quality design and enhancing Colchester’s historic character through the use of context appraisals, sustainable construction, and innovative design.

**Option 2**
This option would retain current policies and guidance on built design and character which provide less rigorous standards on context appraisals and sustainability.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects**
Options for this policy shared the objective of improving the overall quality of life and experience for people living, working and visiting Colchester. The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would go farther in meeting this objective in that it seeks a higher standard of design guidance and sustainability than option 2.

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5.8 Public Realm

The Public Realm Objectives in the Core Strategy are as follows:
- Improve streetscapes and open spaces to provide attractive and accessible spaces for residents to live, work, shop, and relax.

**Issues, Policy Context and Evidence**

**People-friendly Streets**
Colchester’s streets are currently dominated visually and physically by vehicular traffic. Pedestrians and cyclists are confined to the road margins. The exception to this is a small pedestrianised portion of the Historic Core. An analysis of movement in the Town Centre undertaken by Space Syntax in 2002 showed extremely high levels of pedestrian activity of 1-2000 people per hour in the daytime associated with the retail uses on Culver Walk, Lion Walk, Long and Short Wyre Streets and Eld Lane. The St. Botolph’s Masterplan has been developed to enhance this busy pedestrian zone by establishing routes that will be ‘well used, safe and sympathetic to the existing grain of the Town Centre.’ The issue of economic sustainability is addressed ‘through a combination of design that encourages a good distribution of activity (footfall) throughout the area and a careful land use strategy that matches pedestrian sensitive uses to areas where high activity levels are envisaged.’

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26 Space Syntax for Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council, St. Botolph’s Masterplan, June 2003
For residential areas, the Government’s Manual for Streets aims to reduce the impact of vehicles by increasing the priority given to pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport. It notes that the propensity to walk is influenced not only by distance but also by the quality of the walking experience. This entails ensuring continuity of pedestrian networks, which includes avoiding the use of footbridges and subways where possible since they are perceived to be inconvenient and unsafe. Improving the connectivity within the Town Centre and to surrounding areas is a key Core Strategy priority which will be achieved through the use of development contributions and government funding bids.

Guidance from CABE recommends that development plans should ‘include specific strategies aimed at the improvement and maintenance of streetscapes.’

Open Space
The existing provision of open space in Colchester is being assessed through a consultant study in line with the requirements in PPS17 (Open Space). It will include a survey and analysis of needs and demands across the borough and analyse potential surpluses and deficiencies of open space and recreational assets in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility. Existing policy in the Local Plan (Policy L5) requires at least 10% of open space to be provided within new residential developments. In July 2006, this policy was strengthened through the introduction of a SPD on Provision of open space, sport and recreational facilities which sets out standard charges for new development. The Council uses the National Playing Fields Association standard of 2.83 hectares per 1000 population as the minimum guideline for provision of sports and recreation facilities and open spaces.

Guidance from Sport England, ‘Active Design’, identifies three objectives that should be promoted in planning for sport and recreational facilities: improving accessibility and active travel; enhancing amenity and environmental quality; and increasing awareness of opportunities for physical activity through the design and layout of development. Provision of recreational facilities accordingly needs to be viewed in the context of related opportunities to improve transport accessibility, increase walking and cycling, and improve health standards.

The Urban Place Supplement notes the importance of assessing the extent of existing green space already serving an area before setting levels of green space to be provided for an individual new development. ‘So if there is ample green space already within the vicinity of the site the expectation would be that no additional provision need necessarily be made. However, where green space is provided it must be of a very high quality and meet the design criteria below:
- Part of a wider network, connected internally and to its surroundings

27 Department for Transport, Manual for Streets, March 2007
28 Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE), Briefing – Transforming our Streets, 2006, p4
29 Sport England, Active Design, April 2007
The Core Strategy Open Space policy complements the Draft Colchester Parks and Green Spaces Strategy which is based on the following vision:

Colchester’s parks and green spaces are provided to enhance the quality of life of those people who live, work and visit the town and its surroundings.

We aim to develop the range, quality and accessibility of public open space to support regeneration, encourage social inclusion, improve community health and enhance biodiversity.

Policy Options

People-friendly Streets

Option 1
Policy option 1 provides that the Council will promote and secure attractive, safe and people-friendly streets which will encourage more walking, cycling, recreation and local shopping. New development will be required to contribute towards public realm improvements and should provide attractive, permeable and pedestrian-friendly street environments.

Option 2
This option would place less emphasis on enhancing streetscapes and would instead focus on assisting the free flow of traffic.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix B) considered that sustainability objectives would be better served through option 1, which prioritises public realm improvements and pedestrian-friendly street environments rather than option 2 which would prioritise the free flow of traffic. Prioritising traffic would not support the reduction of car use or greenhouse gas emissions, nor would it help create safe and attractive public spaces that enhance the townscape.

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Open Space

Option 1
Policy option 1 provides for a network of strategic green links between the rural hinterland, river corridors and key green spaces within Colchester Town.
A further objective is a network of open spaces and recreational opportunities within walking distance of people’s homes, school and work. At least 25sqm of private/communal open space will also be required for new homes.

**Option 2**
This option would not place as high an importance on securing additional public and private green space through policy requirements. It would result in the incremental loss of green corridors due to the lower priority given to their retention.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects**
Option 1 aims to ensure that all new developments will provide new areas of both public and private open space, while option 2 would prioritise maximising the delivery of housing and employment through lower requirements for green space. The Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix B) found that option 2 would be less sustainable than option 1 as it would limit residents’ access to high quality sites close to the areas they live in and would result in the incremental loss of green corridors with a consequent reduction in biodiversity and landscape character.

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✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

**5.9 Transportation and Accessibility**

The Transportation and Accessibility Objectives in the Core Strategy are as follows:

- Focus development at accessible locations which support public transport, walking and cycling, and reduce the need to travel.

- Develop Colchester as a Regional Transport Node, improving transport connections and gateways within the Borough and to the wider region

- Provide excellent public transportation, walking and cycling connections between centres, communities and their needs.

- Improve the strategic road network and manage traffic and parking demand.

**Issues, Policy Context and Evidence**

The growth in the borough and the region will result in more people who will need to travel to access services and their needs. Unconstrained traffic could grow by approximately 25%\(^{30}\) over the next 15 years. Part of this growth will

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\(^{30}\) Derived from Colchester : A133 Local Action Plan – Stage 2, Mouchelparkman, February 2004 and Stage 2A Addendum report, April 2005
be from new development and increased population and from the existing population. The general trend has been towards longer trips, a reduction in walking and cycling for shorter trips and towards the use of the car as in real terms the cost of motoring decreases as public transport increases.

Colchester in comparison with other areas of Essex has a high level of local residents working locally at 72%\(^{31}\). Just over 50%\(^{32}\) of employed residents work within 5km (3 miles) of their place of work; though the average travel distance to work is just under 18km\(^{33}\). The car dominates as the main mode of travel for work trips at 63%. The balance is made up of other modes and with working/study from home similar to the walking percentage.

Modal Split – Travel to work for Colchester Residents\(^{34}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car (driver or passenger)</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
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<td>Train</td>
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<td>Cycle</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work or studies from home</td>
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Besides employment Colchester has major educational and health establishments serving the sub region including Essex University, Colchester Institute, the Sixth Form College, and Colchester Hospital which attract many people from within and outside the town. The area is a developing tourist attraction with a variety of leisure facilities including the Roman Castle, theatres, a new Visual Arts Centre, a major zoo, a Championship Football Club, a coast line with sandy beaches and tidal estuaries.

As part of the Essex Haven Gateway sub region Colchester is an important employment and educational centre for Tendring District residents, with 8700\(^{35}\) working in Colchester.

The Transport Network

The borough is dissected by Trans European Networks, the A12/A120 trunk road and the Great Eastern railway serving the Haven Gateway sub region connecting the expanding Haven ports at Felixstowe and Harwich with the rest of Great Britain. The A12 carries up to 81,000\(^{36}\) vehicles per day around Colchester. The Highways Agency strategic assessment of the network showed that around Colchester the A12 was 17%\(^{37}\) over capacity. Colchester

\(^{31}\) 2001 Census Profile for Colchester Town, East of England Observatory
\(^{32}\) Census 2001 East of England Travel to Work – Distance and Modes of Transport, Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group, October 2004
\(^{33}\) Census 2001 East of England Travel to Work – Distance and Modes of Transport, Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group, October 2004
\(^{34}\) Census 2001, Travel to Work, Office for National Statistics
\(^{35}\) Census 2001, Travel to Work, Office for National Statistics,
\(^{36}\) [http://www.dft-matrix.net/MapXtreme/NewMap.htm](http://www.dft-matrix.net/MapXtreme/NewMap.htm)
North rail station has just over 4million passenger movements a year\(^{38}\) and line capacity is fully utilised in the peak hours in the London area which restricts growth in train operation. With limited changes proposed for these networks the growth in both passenger and freight movement will place further pressure on their operation.

Colchester town is a focus for bus services with two main operators complemented by smaller local operators. Peak hour services are generally well utilised with a number of 10 minute services in operation\(^{39}\). Services are focused on the town centre. Even though the daytime service is good the main operating constraint is the high level of traffic congestion in the town during peak hours, especially in the town centre, around the A133 corridor and on the eastern approaches to the town. A small number of interregional coach and bus services are operated including an hourly link to Stansted Airport

The urban road network is heavily congested in the peak periods with high levels of traffic entering the town. Parts of the urban network carry over 30,000\(^{40}\) vehicles per day. Many of the junctions are at capacity e.g. on the A133 Avenue of Remembrance\(^{41}\) and severely restrict growth. In the urban area traffic flow measured from 1994 to 2004 has not grown\(^{42}\) suggesting that the network operates at capacity. High flows and physical characteristics have resulted in two air management areas being declared.

The walking and cycle networks mainly follow the road network and make use of parks and open space to provide traffic free routes. From counts undertaken at various locations in 2005 there were over 35,500 pedestrian and 5000 cycle movements\(^{43}\), comparing well with the other Regional Transport Nodes in Essex. The National Cycle Networks routes 1 and 51\(^{44}\) pass through the town into which the local network feeds. The mix of high traffic flows, large roundabouts, urban dual carriageways and subways in certain locations make walking and cycling unattractive.

The rural areas are dependent on the car as their main mode of transport. All of the “A” and “B” road network are radial feeders into Colchester Town. There are limited connections with the A12 Trunk Road. The single carriageway A120 trunk road through Marks Tey carries 23,400 vehicles per day\(^{45}\). Excepting the A12 the only connection between the A and B roads are class 3 or lower roads. The National Cycle Network uses these quietly traffic rural routes to pass through Colchester. The rural bus network in the main

\(^{38}\) East of England Regional Planning Assessment, Dft Rail February 2006
\(^{39}\) Colchester Passport to Travel, Essex County Council, August 2005
\(^{40}\) http://www.dft-matrix.net/MapXtreme/NewMap.htm
\(^{41}\) Colchester : A133 Local Action Plan – Stage 2, Mouchelparkman, February 2004 and Stage 2A Addendum report, April 2005
\(^{42}\) Essex Traffic Monitoring Report 2005, Appendices, Colchester Cordon Screen Line and Monitor
\(^{44}\) Get on your bike, Colchester Cycle Map, September 2006
\(^{45}\) http://www.dft-matrix.net/MapXtreme/NewMap.htm
follows the “A” and “B” roads with most starting and finishing in Colchester. The level of service varies greatly with the commercial services operating in the day and subsidise services in the evening and at weekends. Community Transport services are operated across the borough for those without access to regular services.

The only rail stations in the rural areas are at Marks Tey, Chappel and Wakes Colne and Wivenhoe giving access to mainline services, with connections into Colchester and London.

Policy Options

Accessibility and Changing Travel Behaviour

Option 1
This option emphasises and supports the need to locate development in areas which reduce the need to travel and provide sustainable travel solutions. A key part is to maximise the use of sustainable modes by changing travel behaviour away from the car through travel planning to help overcome congestion.

Option 2
This option would allow growth and development in less central locations, away from the Town Centre and closer to the A12 where car travel and parking is more easily accommodated. Rather than trying to change travel behaviour the road network would be expanded to accommodate the project traffic growth.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
Travel planning and changing travel behaviour is a key part of the strategy and for it to succeed public and private resources and commitment will be required. Following the spatial strategy most of the development will be placed in the main urban area where the opportunities to use alternative modes are at their greatest especially with a high proportion residents working locally and making trips under 5km.

The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 will improve accessibility, reduce the need to travel by car and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Option 1 will also support regeneration and the role of the Town Centre. Option 2 would have the opposite effect of increasing reliance on the car, carbon emissions, and demand for out-of-centre development.

Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

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Walking and Cycling

**Option 1**
This option recognises that walking and cycling are the two most sustainable modes, but the networks need to be improved to facilitate travel behaviour change. Locating development in sustainable locations makes walking and cycling realistic alternatives. Quality walking and cycling routes will be safe and direct to encourage sustainable travel. Changes to the Town Centre will be sought to give priority to these modes.

**Option 2**
This option places less emphasis on the walking and cycling and does not seeks to improve routes, crossings and facilities.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects**
The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would improve access to the Town Centre and thus stimulate economic activity and a more vibrant night time economy. Option 1 would reduce car traffic and carbon emissions and also promote active and healthy lifestyles.

Option 2 would retain the existing poor quality street environments, which would discourage walking and cycling also discourage the patronage of public transport and local shops. Overall option 2 would have the effect of increasing car dependence and traffic. This approach is not sustainable and does not support Colchester objective to be a prestigious regional centre.

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**Public Transport**

**Option 1**
Policy option 1 seeks to improve and use public transport to link together communities with centres, employment and community facilities, for those trips not suitable for walking and cycling. Transit corridors will be established to deliver rapid public transport services with good connections. The public transport entry points into the town are key gateways, and with the transit corridors, give the opportunity to reinforce the use of public transport. Existing planned development is already committed to delivering infrastructure for the Northern Transit corridor into which new development will be linked.

**Option 2**
This option involves only incremental improvements to public transport and will not reinforce the operation of public transport with significant improvements to infrastructure, services and priority.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects**

Strategic improvements to Colchester’s transport network, including transit corridors, Park and Ride and gateway improvements will provide a high quality service and an attractive alternative to the car. This network will be oriented on the Town Centre to stimulate economic growth, and will be well connected to new growth areas to promote sustainable travel behaviour.

The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would promote more sustainable travel, thus reducing traffic, carbon emissions, and the reliance on cars. This option would also support regeneration of rundown areas and the vitality of the Town Centre.

The small and incremental improvements proposed by Option 2 would be insufficient to free buses from increasing congestion, which would inhibit the speed and reliability of public transport services. This option would not offer an attractive alternative to the car and thus traffic and congestion would increase, with impacts on the amenity of local residents and the Town Centre. Option 2 would also result in increased reliance on the car and greenhouse gas emissions.

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**Roads and Traffic**

**Option 1**

Policy option 1 involves improvements to both the strategic and local road network. The approach is to make the best use of the existing infrastructure, improve key aspects of the network and manage demand through the use of alternatives and technology. Strategic roads will be improved to facilitate freight and economic growth, and relieve traffic impacts on the local network. The local road network will also be enhanced to support new developments and facilitate sustainable transport services. This option will not expand the road network to simply satisfy projected traffic growth.

**Option 2**

This option involves no additional improvements to the existing road network, other than standard roads for new development.

**Option 3**

This seeks to improve the road network by accommodating projected traffic growth and creating free flow conditions.
Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 will support the Borough’s economy, sustainable development and transport opportunities. With the growth in the sub region, especially the Haven Gateway Port Development, the strategic network needs improvements to ensure that through traffic, especially freight, can reach its destination reliably. Improving the strategic network also reduces the pressure on the local road network. Option 1 also improves the local network which is important to facilitate economic activity and sustainable development in growth areas. Limited improvements to the existing network will help provide a streetscape that facilitates walking, cycling and public transport.

Option 2 will result in further transport problems, and even without new development this approach will exacerbate congestion and inhibit the operation of public transport. Traffic congestion will also have adverse impacts on local amenity and the economic vitality of the Borough.

Traffic is projected to grow by roughly 20% to 25% and the cost of expanding road infrastructure to accommodate this growth is prohibitively high, and would have substantial impacts on the townscape and local amenity. Furthermore, previous experience indicates that option 3 will not resolve traffic problems, as traffic demand tends to grow as mobility is increased. Road expansion and its impacts on accessibility and local amenity tends to promote more dispersed development patterns. This in turn increases the need to travel and reliance on car based travel. Option 3 is considered to have adverse implications for townscape character, local amenity, accessibility and climate change.

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✓ = The options that best achieves the objective

Parking

Option 1
Policy option 1 seeks to reduce town centre long stay parking which in the main is from peak hour car commuting which causes network congestion. Park and ride will be provided to catch commuters from outside of the town, and also provide a quick and reliable car free access to the town for visitors. It is recognised that short stay car parking provides an essential facility for the economic well being of the town centre and will be provided.

This option will focus on managing car parking at the destination, but will take a more flexible approach to residential parking. The level of car parking within development should accord with the accessibility of the location. To make
best use of land and enhance the streetscape, parking should be located underground, under deck and/or behind buildings.

Option 2
This option seeks to provide car parking to meet the predicted level of demand at both the origin (e.g. housing developments) and the destination (e.g. Town Centre).

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 would enhance the public realms and accessibility, and help reduce congestion and carbon emission. Large areas of parking use land inefficiently and create unattractive public spaces, and this has the effect of reducing accessibility. Minimising the amount of parking and its visual impact encourages more sustainable development patterns and more sustainable travel behaviour. It is important, however, to ensure that sufficient parking is provided to support necessary travel needs and the local economy. Car parking needs to balance between the need to own and use a car, whilst not undermining the environment and the amenity of the area in which it is used. Option 2 does not provide a balanced approach to parking and therefore does not adequately manage the impacts of excessive parking.

Summary of SA Table in Appendix B

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5.10 Natural Environment and Rural Communities

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Objectives in the Core Strategy are as follows:
- Protect Colchester’s natural environment, countryside and coastline.
- Support appropriate local employment and housing development in villages and rural communities.

Issues, Policy Context and Evidence

Natural environment
National policy on the natural environment is contained in a variety of sources including DEFRA/Environment Agency policies and guidance in PPSs 1 (Sustainable Development), 7 (Rural Areas), 9 (Biodiversity), and 25 (Flood Risk) and PPGs 17 (Open Space) and 20 (Coastal Planning).

The Borough of Colchester has a rich and diverse natural environment that is covered in many areas by national, European and international designations and the resulting requirements to ensure their protection. These include the coast, substantial parts of the Colne and Blackwater Estuaries and the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The specific
characteristics of different types of landscape areas in the Borough have been
established with a Landscape Character Assessment Study and these
assessments will be used to inform consideration of development proposals
outside urban areas.\footnote{Chris Blandford Associates, \textit{Colchester Landscape Character Assessment}, November 2005}

The Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal for the
Preferred Options stage provides baseline evidence for the monitoring of
impacts on biodiversity, water quality, flood risk, and air quality.\footnote{Essex County Council, \textit{Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal of
the Colchester Core Strategy Preferred Options}, November 2006}

**Rural communities**

Core Strategy policy on villages is in the first instance informed by the national
guidance on rural policy set forth in PPS7. It provides that sustainable
development should be realised by supporting good quality, carefully-sited
accessible development in existing towns and villages. Planning authorities
are advised to locate most new development in or near to local service
centres, with some limited development in other rural settlements to meet
local business and community needs.

The Countryside Agency’s recommendations in \textit{Planning tomorrow’s
countryside} provide a useful set of guidelines for sustainable rural policies:\footnote{Countryside Agency, \textit{Planning tomorrow’s countryside}, 2000}

- Consider what development is needed for a sustainable countryside as
  well as where it should go, considering not just the location of
development, but the nature of that development, too;
- Move away from the idea of ‘balance’ in making planning decisions,
  and towards integrated policies, where plans look first for solutions
  where there are economic social and environmental benefits, and then
  for solutions which mitigate or compensate for adverse impacts: there
  should always be a net gain and no significant losses from
  development;
- Use positive objectives as the basis of planning, not ‘predict and
  provide’ to determine how best we can reconcile national imperatives
  (such as meeting people’s housing needs) with local circumstances;
- Stress the need for high quality in all development and encourage
  applications which are assessed on the basis of \textit{are they good
  enough to approve?}, rather than \textit{are they bad enough to refuse?} –
  extending the definition of ‘high quality’ from its traditional role in
  building design to include aspects of sustainable development and
  social and economic equity;
- Give a greater role to communities and community planning, but
  incorporated into the existing planning system, rather than as an
  additional layer;
- Respect the character of all landscapes, and protect and enhance the
  best – an understanding of landscape character is an essential starting
  point for all policies involving land use change.
At the regional level, policy SS4 in the East of England Plan provides that LDDs should define the approach to rural settlements through measures to ‘support the continued viability of agriculture and other economic activities such as tourism, the diversification of the economy, the provision of housing for local needs and the sustainability of local services.’

The Essex Rural Strategy identified many of the non-local factors affecting Essex villages, including the following:

- Declining usage and rising thresholds of provision are removing basic services from villages
- In Essex villages, 40% are without a post office, 67% lack a general store, 63% lack a pub and 79% without a doctor’s surgery.
- 16.5% of rural households in the East of England do not have access to a vehicle
- House price inflation has taken rural prices far out of the reach of many young people brought up in the countryside. At the same time, the rural population is ageing.
- The increasing availability of broadband is facilitating access to information, home working and internet shopping.
- Many farmers are diversifying; the common option being a change in use of farm buildings, be it for storage, office space, holiday lets or to accommodate an alternate business of their own. At the same time, other, former commercial properties within villages (such as shops, public houses or workshops) are often given permission to convert to residential use.
- The service sector has become the most dominant rural industry, with tourism especially prominent as a new source of rural employment.
- Rural locations are attracting a diverse range of businesses, particularly micro-businesses with less than 9 employees. These represent a wide mixture of business sectors including high value businesses that can place important on ‘quality of life’ because they require little more than access to electronic communication facilities.

As part of the consultation for the Core Strategy, Colchester Borough Council and the Rural Communities Council of Essex undertook a series of Rural Parishes Workshops in 2005 to further the process of identifying the current situation and future aspirations of rural communities. These workshops culminated in a report and database outlining the existing provision and deficiencies in community facilities, shops and services in Parishes throughout the Borough.

**Policy Options**

**Natural Environment**

**Option 1**
Policy option 1 provides that the Council will conserve and enhance Colchester’s natural environment, countryside and coastline. Strategic green

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49 Essex Rural Partnership, Essex Rural Strategy, July 2005
links between the rural hinterland, river corridors and key green spaces within Colchester Town and Stanway will be protected and enhanced. The green breaks between Colchester Town and Stanway and the surrounding towns and villages will also be maintained. There is a general presumption against greenfield development, and any limited new development in rural locations should enhance the locally distinct character of the landscape. Development will need to minimise and mitigate adverse impacts on river, coastal and ground water quality as well as flood risk.

Option 2
This option could allow new development at greenfield locations rather than focusing development on previously developed land. This would allow incremental development between Colchester Town and the surrounding villages to maximise the delivery of housing and employment development.

Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these policy options (Appendix B) determined that option 1 best supports the aspiration to ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land. Option 2 would enable higher levels of housing and employment to be delivered, but it would dilute the focus on directing new development to town centre/previously developed sites with good access to public transport. Option 2 would also have an adverse implications for the countryside and landscape character of some areas.

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Rural Communities

Option 1
Policy option 1 supports appropriate development of village infill sites and previously developed land. It also provides that the design and construction of new village construction should be high quality in all respects and should contribute to the needs of the local community. Outside village boundaries, the option provides for the favourable consideration of small-scale rural business schemes that are appropriate to local employment needs, minimise negative environmental impacts and harmonise with the local character and surrounding natural environment.

Option 2
This option involves an alternative approach that would discourage any new development in villages to ensure preservation of their character.

Option 3
The other option considered was to allow significant amounts of development in and around village locations to meet both locally generated and wider housing needs.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects**

The Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix B) determined that both options 1 and 3 could help meet housing, employment and community facilities targets, while option 2 would not as it would restrict any further village development. Option 2 would not encourage the regeneration of villages or support the delivery of local community facilities, affordable housing and open space.

Option 1 is considered to be more sustainable than option 3 because it encourages the redevelopment of brownfield land within villages close to established services, but avoids large amounts of greenfield development. Option 3 allows for significant development at locations with low access to shops, services, employment and education. This would increase the reliance on the car and its associated impacts.

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✓ - The options that best achieves the objective

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5.11 Energy, Resources, Recycling and Waste

The Energy Resources, Recycling and Waste Objectives in the Core Strategy are as follows:

- Encouraging renewable energy and the efficient use of scarce resources.
- Reduce, reuse and recycle waste.

**Issues, Policy Context and Evidence**

The Governments Energy White Paper 'Our energy future – creating a low carbon economy' (2003) sets a target to reduce CO₂ emissions by 60% by 2050. The Government’s Planning Policy Statements provide significant policy support for sustainable construction in new development, including energy efficiency. Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) has placed sustainable development as the core principle underpinning planning. In particular, paragraph 22 states, "Local authorities should promote resource and energy efficient buildings". Planning and Climate Change, the supplement to PPS1, takes this further and clearly demonstrates the role that planning should take in both the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. In February 2007, the Borough Council signed up to the Nottingham Declaration, which committed the council to taking measures to tackle the causes and effects of a changing climate.
Planning Policy Statement 22 (Renewable Energy) promotes the increased development of renewable energy resources to facilitate the Government’s target to generate 10% of UK electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010, with the aspiration to double that figure to 20% by 2020. Planning Policy Statement 25 (Development and Flood Risk) advocates the use of sustainable drainage systems in new development proposals to reduce the risk of flooding, add biodiversity and amenity benefits to developments and to aid in pollution prevention and aquifer re-charge. Policy on waste is guided by PPS10 (Planning for Sustainable Waste Management) which promotes the principles of the waste hierarchy of reduction, re-use, recycling and composting, energy recovery and disposal.

The Department for Communities and Local Government\(^50\) has set a target of achieving ‘zero carbon homes’ by 2016. This equates to a 6 star rating in the Code for Sustainable Homes, which also involves providing 100% of energy through local renewable and low carbon technologies (LCT). English Partnerships, the Housing Corporation\(^51\) and the Environment Agency\(^52\) have investigated the costs involved in undertaking sustainable construction in accordance with the Code for Sustainable Homes. Achieving a Code level 3 would involve costs of roughly £2000-£5000 per dwelling, although these costs are likely to decrease significantly in the next 2-5 years. However at current prices, the costs of achieving a higher Code level 4-6 increase substantially (e.g. £30,000 per dwelling). The cost of delivering these standards is expected to reduce significantly as technology improves and economies of scale grow in the future. Large scale greenfield developments will be more able to deliver higher standards than small and difficult regeneration sites. Government subsidies (e.g. stamp duty); reductions in land prices and the savings on energy bills will also have implications for the viability of the sustainable construction. The viability of achieving higher standards of sustainable construction and zero carbon homes therefore needs to be carefully monitored in order to ensure that it does not obstruct housing delivery and regeneration.

The East of England Plan (Proposed Changes) carries forward national targets and sets regional policies on energy, water and waste in Policies ENG1 and 2, WAT1-4 and WM1-9. The primary strategy governing waste planning for Colchester is the Essex Waste Local Plan (2001) which will be updated by a Waste Core Strategy, currently at the initial Issues and Options consultation stage. This document will identify the additional capacity required to manage the waste apportioned to the Borough.

**Policy Options**

**Energy, Resources, Waste and Recycling**


**Option 1**
Policy option 1 would require the Council to meet Government targets requiring all new homes to be zero carbon by 2016. It would also include ambitious renewable energy and recycling targets.

**Option 2**
Option 2 would extend the trajectory to achieve zero carbon homes to 2021, reduce the recycling target to 50%, and would avoid waste and pollution charges.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Comparative Effects**
The Sustainability Appraisal (Appendix B) determined that option 1 is preferred as it would have substantial positive implications for reducing the Borough’s impact on climate change and meeting sustainability objectives. Option 2 would have a less significant effect on sustainability objectives, although, as the less costly option, it would have a more positive effect on the deliverability of housing targets.

The costs of achieving the initial targets set out in option 1 are not considered to be prohibitive or unreasonable; however the costs of achieving higher standards in future needs to be carefully monitored to ensure that they do not undermine housing delivery and regeneration.

**Summary of SA Table in Appendix B**

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✓ = The options that best achieves the objective
6. Policies and Strategies

6.1. Assessment of Preferred Policy Directions

Section 5 of the Sustainability Appraisal focused on a comparative appraisal of the options associated with the various policy themes (e.g. Public Realm). As a result of this comparative appraisal, the preferred policy options were selected to form part of the Core Strategy Preferred Option for consultation. This section is concerned with investigating the effects of these preferred policy directions as part of the overall strategy. The positive and negative effects of the preferred policy directions are discussed below in regard to each theme. The implications between different themes are also referenced to indicate the overall effect of the strategy as a whole.

The appraisal of the policy themes and the strategy against the sustainability objectives is detailed in Appendix C.

6.2 Sustainable Development

Preferred Policy Directions
The Core Strategy Preferred Options (Amendments) proposes two preferred policies in regard to the broad sustainable development theme:

- SD1 Sustainable Development Locations
- SD2 Supporting Communities with facilities and Infrastructure

These preferred policy directions were considered to be more sustainable than the alternative options and generally have positive implications in regard to the sustainability objectives.

The preferred Sustainable Development Policies direct development to areas with good accessibility and minimal environmental impacts. New development will also be supported by the necessary facilities and infrastructure, which will help improve the education and employment opportunities for the Borough’s population. The Sustainable Development Policies directed the majority of development to be located on previously developed land. This has a positive impact on the countryside and regenerating existing built up areas, including contaminated land.

Sustainability Appraisal – Adverse Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these preferred policies (Appendix C) identified potential adverse effects in regard to the broad issues of flood risk, European sites, infrastructure capacity and delivery. The East Growth Areas is subject to flood risk and additional development in this area could increase exposure to flooding. The scale of development set out in the East of England Plan is likely to place recreational pressure on designated European sites, and have broader implications for biodiversity in the borough. Even vacant brown field land has the potential to provide habitats for a diverse range of species. The scale of development during the plan period, over 17,100 homes and 14,200 jobs, will also place pressure on existing infrastructure and facilities, and there
is a risk that this development will not deliver sufficient funding for an adequate provision of new facilities and infrastructure.

**Monitoring, Mitigation, Contingency and Risk**
In regard to flood affected areas, the Council is undertaking a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which will target key development areas, including the Colne Harbour (East Colchester) area and Rowhedge Port. The outcomes of the flood risk assessment will help inform master planning in these regeneration areas and design guidance for specific developments. To minimise the risk associated with flood affected areas the Core Strategy does not seek to intensify development beyond established master plans and development briefs.

The recreational impacts on designated European sites, can be best mitigated through the provision of alternative open space and recreational facilities. The Open Space policy in the Core Strategy and the Open Space, Sport and Recreation SPD seek to secure private, public and contributions toward strategic open spaces with all new developments. This should provide sufficient open space to meet recreational needs in the Borough, and minimise impacts on European sites. The provision of private/communal, public and strategic open spaces will also help retain biodiversity in urban areas, and design guidance (e.g. Urban Place Supplement) should seek to ensure that the ecological context of sites is considered by development proposals. These issues have been identified as having a significant effect on European sites in the Appropriate Assessment: Screening Report (Appendix D) and will be further addressed in the full Appropriate Assessment, to inform the submission Core Strategy.

The scale of development required by the East of England Plan will inevitably place pressure on existing infrastructure and facilities. It is essential that new development contributes towards the delivery of new facilities and infrastructure to supplement the existing provision; however it is likely that development contributions alone will not suffice. The preferred policies seek to optimise the collection of development contributions, but Council will also need to source public funding. Collecting a significant proportion of funding towards facilities and infrastructure will build confidence amongst partners and help secure public funding. The Council therefore needs to manage and monitor development contributions carefully to optimise the benefits for the community.

**6.3 Centres and Employment**

**Preferred Policy Directions**
The Core Strategy Preferred Options (Amendments) proposes three preferred policies in regard to the Centres and Employment theme:

- CE1 Centre and Employment Hierarchy
- CE2 Mixed Use Centres
- CE3 Employment Zones
These preferred policy directions were considered to be more sustainable than the alternative options and generally have positive implications in regard to the sustainability objectives.

The preferred Centre and Employment Policies direct major employment development and economic growth toward the Town Centre, Urban Gateways and Strategic Employment Zones. Moderate scale and local employment development will be supported in local employment zones, district and neighbourhood centres areas with good accessibility and minimal environmental impacts. Policies within the Centres and Employment Chapter are in general conformity with objectives of the Core Strategy and the Sustainability Objectives. In particular policies CE1, CE2 and CE3 all have a positive effect on ensuring the development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land. The policies are also considered to have a positive effect on the objective of achieving a prosperous and sustainable economy and improve the vitality of town centres by primarily encouraging new employment development to areas within the town centre.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Adverse Effects**
The Sustainability Appraisal of these preferred policies (Appendix C) identified potential adverse effects in regard to the broad issues of congestion in the Town Centre, accessibility to employment zones and risks for employment delivery. The policies involve a strong town centre focus that will inevitably result in more development and activity in Colchester’s Town Centre. This approach may also result in more congestion in the Town Centre. Preferred policy CE3 is considered to have a negative effect on the objective of achieving sustainable travel behaviour solely because some established employment zones are not highly accessible. The Centre and Employment policies direct employment developments toward sustainable location in accordance with the Centres and Employment Hierarchy, and discourage development elsewhere. This approach has many positive implications for sustainability, although it also involves a risk of hindering economic growth needed to deliver the necessary employment.

**Monitoring, Mitigation, Contingency and Risk**
Localised congestion is not necessarily a bad outcome, and busy and successful Town Centres will usually have localised congestion issues. Providing additional road space and car parking can have a negative affect on street amenity and the townscape of town centres, so traffic needs to be carefully managed. It is essential that high quality and convenient sustainable alternatives to the car are provided to and within the Town Centre to reduce congestion implications. The Transport and Accessibility policies seek to improve walking, cycling and public transport opportunities within and to Colchester Town Centre. Improvements to the streetscape and the public realm will also help mitigate the amenity impacts of local traffic in Town Centres.

Preferred policy CE3 is considered to have a negative effect on sustainable travel behaviour solely because some established employment zones are not highly accessible. Many existing allocations are poorly services by public
transport at present. Locating future employment in these areas could potentially increase use of the private car, which will in turn have a negative effect on the level of greenhouse gas emissions. The Core Strategy seeks to deliver improved public transport links to the Strategic Employment Zones to offer employees sustainable travel opportunities. During the application stage for each proposal officers will work to ensure that suitable public transport provision and infrastructure is secured alongside the development.

Limiting employment development that is inconsistent with the Centre and Employment Hierarchy is unlikely to hinder economic growth and employment delivery; however it is important to monitor progress to ensure that employment targets are achieved. The Annual Monitoring Report will provide the evidence to show how the Borough is progressing with regards to the number of jobs created and the floorspace provided. If the actual number is below the projected number then the policies have been given the flexibility to provide a range of jobs in a range of locations which will also ensure that the Plan has the capacity to respond to short term changes to the employment market without prejudicing the prosperity of the Borough at the end of the Plan period.

6.4 Housing

Preferred Policy Directions
The preferred policies for the housing chapter have been informed and directed by the requirement in the East of England Plan to provide a minimum of 17,100 homes in the period 2001-2021. The policies preferred by the Council take this figure on board and outline the directions for future housing development within the Borough. The Core Strategy Preferred Options (Amendments) proposes five preferred policies in regard to the Housing theme:

- H1 Housing Delivery
- H2 Housing Density
- H3 Housing Diversity
- H4 Affordable Housing
- H5 Gypsy and Travellers

These preferred policy directions were considered to be more sustainable than the alternative options and generally have positive implications in regard to the sustainability objectives.

The housing policies will help deliver the number and type of housing needed by Colchester’s community, including affordable housing and sites for gypsy and travellers. The housing policies also support regeneration and the vitality of the Town Centre by focusing housing development on previously developed land and accessible locations. These policies will also improve accessibility and create sustainable and mixed communities, as a range of housing options will be available in locations within a short distance of shops, employment and services.

Sustainability Appraisal – Adverse Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these preferred policies (Appendix C) identified potential adverse effects in regard to the broad issues of flooding, gypsy and travellers, affordable housing and the risks for housing delivery. The Colne Harbour part of the East Growth Areas is subject to flood risk and additional development in this area could increase exposure to flooding. The need for Gypsy and Travellers sites is to be clarified by the East of England Plan single issue review, and the authorised sites may have adverse impacts on established local character. The affordable housing requirements may adversely affect the delivery of small and difficult regeneration developments and the delivery of associated infrastructure and facilities. Furthermore, the combination of requirements and contributions, including affordable housing, sustainable construction, public realm and transport etc, involves a risk of obstructing the delivery of the minimum housing provision.

**Monitoring, Mitigation, Contingency and Risk**

In regard to flood affected areas, the Council is undertaking a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment which will target key development areas, including the Colne Harbour (East Colchester) area and Rowhedge Port. The outcomes of the flood risk assessment will help inform master planning in these regeneration areas and design guidance for specific developments. To minimise the risk associated with flood affected areas the Core Strategy does not seek to intensify development beyond established master plans and development briefs.

The Council have recently given permission for a Gypsy and Traveller site to be located at Severalls Lane which is to accommodate the current need. However it is likely that over the life time of the plan this need will increase and another site(s) will need to be identified. The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) are undertaking a single issue review on Gypsy and Travellers needs across the region which will inform the Borough’s needs further. The policy has enough in built flexibility to respond to the results of the EERA single issue review and meet the needs of Gypsy and Traveller Communities within or passing through the Borough. The permitted site is a Greenfield location which has some adverse effects on ecology and landscape character, however it was considered to be the most sustainable option. The potential impacts on local character could be mitigated through improved landscaping and site management, which should be addressed further in more specific documents.

The preferred policy raises affordable housing requirement to 35% and lowers the thresholds to 10 dwellings in urban areas and 3 dwellings in rural communities, with financial contributions for other developments. The overall requirement is consistent with the East of England Plan’s regional affordable housing target, but the threshold is lower than the national indicative threshold of 15 dwellings in PPS3: Housing. The preferred policy was considered to be the most sustainable option in light of available evidence, although the Council is currently undertaking a Housing Market Assessment to test the viability of the options. The HMA will provide an evidence base for further refinement of the policy to ensure that it does not undermine the delivery of housing and associated facilities and infrastructure. The preferred policy also
needs to be flexibly worded to take into account the viability of small and
difficult regeneration developments.

In addition to affordable housing, the Core Strategy seeks to increase
standards and contributions from housing developments in regard to,
sustainable construction, open space/public realm, transport and community
facilities etc. All these elements of sustainable communities involve costs that,
collectively, may undermine the viability of some small and difficult
developments, which would otherwise make a significant positive contribution
overall to housing delivery and the regeneration of an area. The Housing
Market Assessment will help to test the effect of affordable housing
requirements and other contributions on development viability and housing
delivery. The preferred policies also need to be flexibly worded to take into
account the viability of housing developments, to ensure that minimum
housing provision is delivered with confidence.

6.5 Community Facilities

Preferred Policy Directions
The preferred policy recognises and places great emphasis on the delivery of
community facilities through partnership working with a range of stakeholders
and a mixture of public and private companies. The strategic projects
identified, along with facilities for local communities, will have a positive effect
on the Sustainability Appraisal criteria of achieving a prosperous and
sustainable economy; improving the vitality of town centres; improving the
education, skills and health of the Borough’s population; creating safe and
attractive public spaces; and reducing crime.

Sustainability Appraisal – Adverse Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal found that the impact CF1 will have on the
environment is minimal because the policy encourages the provision of
community facilities in accessible locations in order to maximise community
access, encourage multi-use facilities and build a sense of local character.

Monitoring, Mitigation, Contingency and Risk
Monitoring of community facilities delivery will be needed to ensure that it is
proportionate to a particular area’s needs and is prioritised appropriately with
other needs such as affordable housing placing financial demands on
development. While funding has been identified for the strategic projects
identified in CF1, the overall level of funding for community facilities is reliant
on development delivering sufficient levels of planning gain. As noted above
in the commentary on the Sustainable Development policies, it is considered
likely that development contributions alone will not suffice and the Council will
also need to source public funding and carefully manage and monitor
development contributions.

6.6 Urban Renaissance
Preferred Policy Directions
The Sustainability Appraisal on the preferred Urban Renaissance Policies showed that the policies have a general positive effect on the headline objective which ensures that all developments are located sustainably and make efficient use of the land available. The policies have the positive effect because they are focused on the regeneration areas which are in accessible locations, re-use previously developed land, and will be able to accommodate higher densities of development. The higher densities prescribed for regeneration areas need to be supported by the increased provision of public transport linkages.

Sustainability Appraisal – Adverse Effects
Urban regeneration policies could have a negative effect on social inclusion and affordable housing objectives by raising property values, thereby driving out lower income households and businesses. The regeneration area in East Colchester is in a flood risk area and as noted above additional development in this area could increase exposure to flooding. The Sustainability Appraisal highlighted possible negative effects on biodiversity arising from building on vacant brownfield sites which currently provide wildlife habitats.

Monitoring, Mitigation, Contingency and Risk
Urban regeneration areas will need to include affordable housing and start-up business units to address the gentrification effects. The forthcoming Strategic Flood Risk Assessment should assist flood risk mitigation in East Colchester by informing master planning and design guidance for the area. Design guidance and requirements to provide and retain open space will be required to mitigate the potential effects of development on biodiversity within regeneration areas. Successful regeneration is dependant on the co-ordinated development of a series of individual projects which are then knitted together with supporting infrastructure. Creation of this critical mass will require the successful phasing and delivery of a wide range of infrastructure, which will need to be funded through both development and other public and private resources.

6.7 Public Realm
Preferred Policy Directions
The Public Realm policies seek to achieve attractive and accessible streets and open space across the Borough. The Sustainability Appraisal demonstrates that the policies have a positive affect on the Plan and in particular the social and environmental objectives against which the policies were appraised. The policies also have a positive impact on the objective of achieving more sustainable travel behaviour and reducing the need to travel because more people will be closer to open spaces and they will be able to access these by using the attractive streets and cycle links between areas. PR1 in particular strives to reduce the impact that cars have on the streets across the Borough which in turn will have a positive effect on the attractiveness of the Borough’s settlements. Provision of open spaces will
help to improve the attractiveness of the Borough and encourage people to use their local areas for recreation.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Adverse Effects**
While the Sustainability Appraisal found overall positive effects for the public realm policies, their success depends on the successful implementation of other policies in the plan. The Sustainability Appraisal thus indicated that prioritising non-motorised uses of town centre streets could have a negative effect on congestion on surrounding streets if overall travel demand levels were not managed and public transport improved.

**Monitoring, Mitigation, Contingency and Risk**
Monitoring of streetscape improvements will be required to assess how they contribute to the wider benefits of regeneration and town centre vitality. The provision of public transport will be an essential adjunct to town centre streetscape improvements. Monitoring of open space delivery will be needed to ensure that it is proportionate to a particular area’s needs and is prioritised appropriately with other needs that place financial demands on development such as affordable housing. Flexibility in the provision of open space may be required in the case of small high density town centre residential developments constrained by site limitations. Provision of additional large scale open space will be required to mitigate the effects of the increased recreational demands placed on sensitive designated nature sites by additional population growth.

**6.8 Accessibility and Transportation**

**Preferred Policy Directions**
The Core Strategy Preferred Options (Amendments) proposes five preferred policies in regard to the Transport and Accessibility theme:

- **TA1 Accessibility and Changing Travel Behaviour**
- **TA2 Walking and Cycling**
- **TA3 Public Transport**
- **TA4 Roads and Traffic**
- **TA5 Parking**

These preferred policy directions were considered to be more sustainable than the alternative options and generally have positive implications in regard to the sustainability objectives. The policies seek to increase the provision and use of walking, cycling and public transport facilities and ensure that all residents within the Borough have good access to these services. Accessibility and Transportation Policies have a positive effect on the objective of providing people with good access to their needs as well as increasing the levels of sustainable transport which in turn will then reduce the dependency on the private car. Development in accessible locations as seen in other policies can only be achieved through the provision of quality, reliable and convenient public transport.

Policies within the Accessibility and Transportation chapter will also have a positive effect on the environment objectives, by reducing pollution and
greenhouse gas emissions. Alongside the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions the policies seek to improve walking and cycling, which involves improvements to the public realm and promotes active and healthy lifestyles.

**Sustainability Appraisal – Adverse Effects**
The Sustainability Appraisal of these preferred policies (Appendix C) identified potential adverse effects in regard to the broad issues of town centre congestion, car parking, amenity impacts of transport projects, control and management of transport, and the risks for delivery of transport infrastructure and services. The Core Strategy and transport policies involve a strong town centre focus that will inevitably result in more development and activity in Colchester’s Town Centre. This approach may also result in more localised congestion in the Town Centre. This issue will also involve concerns about the supply of parking in centres and potential adverse implications for businesses. Key transport projects will often involve implications for local amenity, which need to be considered and managed. The management and funding of most transport infrastructure and services is the responsibility of Essex County Council, and Colchester Borough Council will need to work in partnership with the County to ensure the best outcomes for local communities. Colchester is also reliant on contributions from development and external sources of public funding to deliver transport improvements, and there is a risk that funding will be insufficient for adequate provision of necessary transport infrastructure, facilities and services.

**Monitoring, Mitigation, Contingency and Risk**
The focus on the Town Centre and other key centres is likely to result in localised congestion issues, although this is not necessarily a bad outcome. Busy and successful Town Centres will usually have localised congestion, and this can help to slow and discourage car traffic, which in turn improves the safety and amenity for people in the busy streets. It is important that localised congestion does not obstruct public transport movements, and traffic is managed to minimise impacts on amenity and safety. It is essential that high quality and convenient sustainable alternatives to the car are provided to and within the Town Centre to reduce congestion implications. The Transport and Accessibility policies seek to improve walking, cycling and public transport opportunities within and to Colchester Town Centre. Improvements to the streetscape and the public realm will also help mitigate the amenity and safety impacts of traffic in Town Centres.

Managing car parking in the Town Centre, and reducing long term parking, is essential to minimise unnecessary traffic and reduce congestion in order to optimise bus movements, street amenity and walking and cycling opportunities. Limiting parking in the Town Centre also involves a risk of adversely affecting business, as people may chose to shop and work at out-of-centre locations. Car parking must therefore be managed carefully to ensure that the economic vitality of the town centre is not adversely affected. The Park and Ride schemes in combination with Transit Corridors and walking and cycling improvements need to be delivered to offer people with excellent access to the Tow Centre. Also out-of-centre developments need to be discouraged so that they do not unduly compete with the Town Centre by
offering large areas of free parking at locations that are poorly serviced by public transport and thus propagate car traffic and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

Some key transport projects identified in the Core Strategy are likely to involve impacts on local amenity and environmental attributes. None of the projects is likely to have a significant adverse affect on designated sites; however more localised issues such as noise still need to be addressed. At a broad level the preferred policies have been selected as the most sustainable options, however the Core Strategy does not stipulate specific designs or routes. Specific issues and impacts, including noise, character and biodiversity, will need to be identified, addressed and mitigated at the subsequent planning and project stages.

The scale of development required by the East of England Plan will inevitably place pressure on existing transport infrastructure and services. Transport infrastructure is expensive and beyond the means of the Borough Council to deliver independently, so contributions and public funding needs to managed and monitored to provide partners with confidence of efficient delivery and ensure that the necessary infrastructure and services are delivered to meet the needs of local communities. It is essential that new development contributes towards the delivery of new facilities and infrastructure to supplement the existing provision; however it is likely that development contributions alone will not suffice. The preferred policies seek to optimise the collection of development contributions, but Council will also need to source public funding. Collecting a significant proportion of funding towards transport infrastructure and services will build confidence amongst partners and help secure public funding. The provision of public transport infrastructure and services is largely the responsibility of Essex County Council. The Borough Council will work in partnership with stakeholders like the County Council and developers to secure the necessary transport infrastructure to support existing communities and new development.

6.9 Natural Environment and Rural Communities

Preferred Policy Directions
The preferred policy options for the natural environment and rural communities (NE1 and NE2) were considered to be more sustainable than the alternative options and generally have positive implications in regards to the sustainability objectives of conserving and enhancing the natural environment and biodiversity of the Borough. Policy NE1 especially seeks to protect the formal and informal green links between the rural hinterland, river corridors and key green spaces within the urban areas. Policies NE1 and NE2 both seek to protect the rural environment where possible but in circumstances where development is needed this needs to be done in a sympathetic manner which will enhance the distinct local character and meet the needs of the community. Policy NE2 has a positive effect on sustaining the rural economy as it supports appropriate development to meet the needs of the local community.
Sustainability Appraisal – Adverse Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal did not identify any significant adverse impacts arising from the natural environment policies.

Monitoring, Mitigation, Contingency and Risk
Monitoring of greenfield land development rates and biodiversity indicators in the Annual Monitoring Report will allow the Borough to monitor the effectiveness of countryside protection policies. Water quality issues will be addressed in the preparation of River Basin Management Schemes prepared pursuant to the Water Frameworks Directive and future plan revisions will need to take into account such external environmental plans. This also includes assessments of the overall impact of development and population growth on designated sites. The success of village policies will be reflected in the monitoring of local facilities and in the take-up of villages preparing Parish Plans and Village Design Statements. The impact of rural business diversification will require detailed monitoring to ensure that businesses address local employment need and avoid significant negative environmental impacts.

6.10 Energy, Resources, Recycling and Waste

Preferred Policy Directions
The Core Strategy Preferred Options (Amendments) proposes one preferred policy in regard to Energy Resources, Recycling and Waste:

- ER1 Energy Resources, Recycling and Waste

This preferred policy direction was considered to be more sustainable than the alternative option and generally has positive implications in regard to the sustainability objectives. The preferred policy requires developments to meet stringent sustainable construction techniques which will aim to reduce the use of fossil fuels and water and encourage reuse and recycling of resources to minimise waste. Perhaps the most significant part of Policy ER1 is the ambition to deliver zero carbon homes by 2016 which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the Borough. The policy will have positive implications for improving the efficient use of natural resources and reducing waste, pollution, carbon emissions, as well as water and energy consumption. The preferred policy also has a positive effect on reducing the risk of flooding by incorporating sustainable urban drainage systems and reducing the Borough’s contribution to climate change.

Sustainability Appraisal – Adverse Effects
The Sustainability Appraisal of these preferred policies (Appendix C) identified potential adverse effects in regard to the broad viability of housing delivery. The costs of achieving initial standards (e.g. Code Level 3) of sustainable construction and renewable energy are considered to be reasonable and achievable. At present, however, the cost of achieving higher standards (e.g. Zero Carbon Homes) is likely to unduly obstruct housing delivery.
The preferred policy options involve a risk of unduly obstructing housing delivery due to costs involved in achieving high standards of sustainable construction. The costs of sustainable construction, renewable energy and LCT are expected to decrease significantly in the next 2-5 years as technologies improve and larger economies of scale are created. The changes in these costs need to be monitored carefully to review the viability of achieving the trajectory set out in the preferred policy.

The policy targets may undermine redevelopment on small and difficult sites. Large scale greenfield developments will be more able to deliver higher standards than small and difficult regeneration sites. Other development contributions and requirements (e.g. affordable housing), Government subsidies (e.g. stamp duty), reductions in land prices and the savings on energy bills will also have implications for the viability of developments. The viability of achieving higher standards of sustainable construction and zero carbon homes therefore needs to be carefully monitored in order to ensure that it does not obstruct housing delivery and regeneration.

It is considered important to set out a trajectory for the achievement of Zero Carbon Homes over the plan period, to monitor progress, coordinate the implications of this policy target with other aspects of the strategy, and to provide clear guidance to stakeholders about sustainable construction expectations associated with future development proposals. However there is also a risk that the preferred policy may conflict with future changes to Government policy and Building Regulations. The preferred policy will therefore need to be flexibly worded to take the viability of developments into account, and ensure that there is no conflict with the future evolution of Government policy and Building Regulations.
7. Implementation

7.1. Links to Other Plans, Strategies and Projects

The Local Development Scheme provides a timetable (see Appendix E) for the development of the Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy is scheduled for submission in November 2007 and adoption in 2008. The Issues and Options stage for the Site Allocations DPD and the Development Policies DPD will commence in 2007 with initial consultation scheduled for November 2007. Other subsequent documents will eventually form part of the LDF including the following:

- Area Action Plans
- Adopted Proposal Maps
- Supplementary Planning Documents (e.g. Transport Strategy)

Section 6 of this SA Report identifies the positive and the negative effects of the Core Strategy and the preferred policies and outlines what possible mitigation measures, contingencies or actions are needed to optimise the strategy’s implications for the local community. By its very nature the Core Strategy is a strategic document that indicates the direction the Council wants to move towards over the lifetime of the plan. The Core Strategy also provides strategic guidance for the production of future DPDs which will be more detailed and tend to focus upon a specific issue or area(s).

The Sustainability Appraisal has identified a number of issues, adverse effects and risks resulting from preferred options and the strategy that need to be addressed either within the Core Strategy or in subsequent documents in the LDF. The Core Strategy touches on many issues at a broad strategic level, but does not set out details to address complexities associated with these issues. At this preferred options stage, the Council has not yet fully developed how the potential impacts and risks will be addressed in subsequent documents. The Core Strategy has been amended where appropriate to help mitigate or provide contingencies for potential adverse impacts and risks. The Core Strategy submission document will seek to further address any additional issues identified at consultation. The SA Report that accompanies the submission Core Strategy will also further detail how impacts and risks will be addressed in subsequent DPDs and SPDs.

7.2. Proposals for monitoring

This final section of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) looks at how the likely effects of the Core Strategy are to be monitored over the plan period. Under the SEA Directive Local Authorities are required to monitor the implementation of significant environmental effects that result from the policies within the Core Strategy. Monitoring of the SA outcomes ensures that any adverse impacts are addressed at an early stage and appropriate contingency measures are put in place. All aspects of the SA will be
monitored by the Council as part of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which is submitted to the Government Office in December of each year. The AMR monitors the performance of the LDF and incorporating the SA monitoring into the AMR will ensure consistency and appropriate action is carried out as necessary.

The SA is an on-going process that will be continually refined at each stage of the LDF. As a result the SA and the baseline information contained within it will have to be continually updated through the collection of new data to ensure that trends are identified at the earliest possible stage. The findings and recommendations from this SA will be fed into the Core Strategy submission document to ensure future LDF documents are up to date and take into account the positive effects from the Core Strategy Policies.