

## **North Essex Authorities – Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans**

### **Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

#### **Environmental Report – Preferred Options:**

#### **Non-Technical Summary**

**June 2016**





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## **Glossary of Acronyms**

ALC	Agricultural Land Classification
ATLAS	Advisory Team for Large Applications
BDC	Braintree District Council
CA	Conservation Area
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
DPD	Development Plan Document
EC	European Community
ECC	Essex County Council
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
HMA	Housing Market Area
I&O	Issues and Options
LB	Listed Building
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LUC	Land Use Consultants
LoWS	Local Wildlife Sites
MSA	Minerals Safeguarding Area
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OAN	Objectively Assessed Need
PDL	Previously Developed Land
PO	Preferred Options
PPG	Planning Policy Guidance
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SA/SEA	Sustainability Appraisal incorporating the Strategic Environmental Assessment
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SM	Scheduled Monument
SPA	Special protection Area
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

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TDC	Tendring District Council
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association
UDC	Uttlesford District Council
WRC	Water Recycling Centre (previously Waste Water Treatment Works)

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council, together forming the 'North Essex Authorities,' in conjunction with Essex County Council as a key partner in its strategic role for infrastructure and service provision, commissioned Place Services of Essex County Council to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for a Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans. This report is the Non-Technical Summary to the main SA Environmental Report.

Place Services are acting as consultants for this work; therefore the content of this SA should not be interpreted or otherwise represented as the formal view of Essex County Council.

## 1.2 Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans

In Essex as elsewhere, the influences of population and economic growth do not stop at administrative boundaries. Settlement patterns, migration flows, commuting and strategic infrastructure needs all have significant influences within and between local authority areas.

Local Plans are the main vehicle for conveying an area's growth requirements and how these will be accommodated. However, individual local authority boundaries cannot encapsulate the geographies of issues that transcend those boundaries. Through active and on-going collaboration the authorities can plan, manage and review strategic objectives for the effective implementation of sustainable development and enhanced environments.

Consequently, the neighbouring authorities of Braintree, Colchester and Tendring have agreed to come together through a shared desire to promote sustainable growth; and the particular need to articulate the strategic priorities within the wider area and how these will be addressed. Central to this is the effective delivery of planned strategic growth, particularly housing and employment development, with the necessary supporting infrastructure. Chelmsford City Council is also within the Housing Market Area (HMA), and in preparation of its Local Plan will incorporate the relevant content of the strategic and cross-boundary policies into its Local Plan.

The Common Strategic Part 1 for the independent Local Plans of Braintree District, Colchester Borough and Tendring District Councils ensures constructive engagement between these authorities in meeting the Duty to Co-operate requirements of the Localism Act (2011) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012). The geographic and functional relationship between the authorities' areas is also demonstrated by the fact that together they form the majority of a single Housing Market Area (HMA) for planning purposes.

The Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans is intended to form part of each of the authorities' separate Local Plan, with the main purpose of covering the strategic Local Plan requirements of:

- Articulating a spatial portrait of the area, including its main settlements and strategic infrastructure, as a framework for accommodating future planned growth;
- Setting out the numbers of additional homes and jobs across the area that will be needed covering the plan period;
- Providing a strategic vision for how planned growth in north Essex will be realised;
- Setting strategic objectives and policies for key growth topics; and

- Highlighting the key strategic growth locations across the area and the necessary new or upgraded infrastructure to support this growth.

The Local Plan for each authority will correspond to 'Part 2' in each instance.

### **1.3 The Requirement for Sustainability Appraisal**

The requirement for Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) emanates from a high level national and international commitment to sustainable development. The most commonly used definition of sustainable development is that drawn up by the World Trade Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 which states that sustainable development is:

*'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'*

SA examines the effects of proposed plans and programmes in a wider context, taking into account economic, social and environmental considerations in order to promote sustainable development. It is mandatory for Local Plans to undergo a Sustainability Appraisal in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended by the Planning Act 2008, and in accordance with paragraph 165 of the NPPF.

### **1.4 Local Plan Progress of the Relevant Authorities**

#### **1.4.1 Braintree District Council Local Plan**

Braintree District Council are undertaking an 8 week public consultation on a Draft Local Plan (Preferred Options stage) in June, to which this SA report relates.

Previously, the Council consulted on a Local Plan Issues and Scoping Report in January – March 2015. Relevant to the scope of the Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans, the Local Plan Issues and Scoping Report highlighted the following key issues:

- Large numbers of new homes are required in the District to support the growing population;
- The District may not have enough brownfield sites (those where buildings have previously been located) to accommodate the new homes that need to be provided; and
- The Council must balance new homes with protection of the natural and historic environment.

This document highlighted the need to demonstrate that the new Plan can achieve and maintain a supply of readily available development sites for new homes, meeting a much higher target than in the past. Regarding this, and in response to the above key issues, it looked at a number of options, including:

- Focusing new homes in the existing towns and larger villages;
- Building new homes in one or more new villages;
- Dispersing new homes between all areas of the District;
- Building new homes in areas where they can provide funding for major infrastructure projects such as new roads; and
- Building new homes on the existing public transport/rail network to encourage sustainable

travel.

#### **1.4.2 Colchester Borough Council**

Consultation on a Draft Local Plan, outlining the Council's preferred options for growth in the Borough is scheduled to commence in July 2016, to which this SA also relates.

The Council consulted on an Issues and Options Local Plan in early 2015. This document included key issues regarding:

- Development of realistic housing targets for both market and affordable housing.
- Allocation of new housing sites in the most sustainable locations.
- Integrating new housing into the community by getting the right densities and character appropriate to the Borough's diverse neighbourhoods ranging from the Town Centre.
- Building housing of different types and sizes to cater for the full range of ages and needs, with particular regard to the needs of specific groups including students, families, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities such as gypsies and travellers, and older residents.
- Addressing the issue of supporting people who want to build their own homes.
- Achieving high quality sustainable housing design with policies that strike a balance between ensuring quality through standards and supporting innovation through a flexible approach.
- Seeking to ensure, in addressing all of the issues above, that the end result is the creation of high quality, sustainable places.
- Ensuring the delivery of well-located sites to support employment with particular regard to growing sectors of the economy.
- Development of policies to support new investment and help existing businesses overcome barriers to success and to help train new workers.
- Ensuring there is sufficient land across the plan period to support housing growth
- Development of a retail hierarchy which safeguards the pre-eminence of the Town Centre while supporting appropriate levels of growth in other areas.
- Review of existing Town Centre boundary, primary shopping area and primary shopping frontages.
- Development of policies for the Town Centre that help to create a balanced mix of activities in the daytime, evening and night time.
- Development of policies which support tourism, leisure, culture and the arts.

The responses to this consultation have been collated and analysed. The Council has been collecting evidence and commissioning studies which has informed the new Local Plan's evidence base. For example evidence has been gathered through a 'Call for Sites' exercise whereby the Council invited proposals for new uses of land in the Borough for potential inclusion in the new Local Plan. In addition these sites have been assessed thoroughly in a Strategic Land Availability Assessment, which explored the suitability, availability and achievability of all land use proposals proposed in the Borough.

### 1.4.3 Tendring District Council

The District Council intends to provide the public with a chance to make representations on a Preferred Options Local Plan in July 2016, in line with their Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and through best practice in plan-making. This consultation ensures that the plan-making process is transparent and is informed to also ensure the best possible outcomes for the District.

Tendring District Council consulted on an Issues and Options Local Plan in 2015. Representing the first stage in the plan-making process, this involved the LPA exploring 'issues and options' across the District in order to develop spatial strategy selection and scenarios surrounding growth. The key issues emanating from and included within the Issues and Options covered needs to:

- Plan for the right number of new homes, of the right size, type and tenure to be built and in the right locations for current and future generations
- Meet the challenges presented by a lack of brownfield land
- Build homes to boost the economy by building more homes and increasing the population in the right locations to boost the demand for goods and services, unlock land for businesses and deliver new infrastructure
- Support growth locations and prioritising economic development projects
- Target growth sectors and promote sectors of the economy with greatest potential for significant growth in the future
- Improve knowledge and skills through working with businesses, schools and colleges to provide the training and work experience the residents need to address shortages in skills
- Support existing businesses through working closely with existing businesses, supporting them to expand and diversify

The development of 'issues and options', and their subsequent SA, ensures that the LPA is making every effort to meet housing needs. The Issues and Options Local Plan 2015 looked at broad locations for growth.

In addition, a number of additional growth options or scenarios have been developed alongside additional options for the distribution of growth in different areas of the District as can be considered reasonable. These are in consideration of available land as put forward for allocation in a call-for-sites exercise that ran concurrently with the Issues and Options consultation.

The identification of these options responded to the requirement to meet the full objectively assessed need over the plan period, particularly in light of the criticisms of the previous Local Plan that was halted in 2014, and the options were considered to be extensive, definitive and reasonable for exploration at that stage.

## 2 Key Sustainability Issues and Sustainability Objectives

### 2.1 Introduction

The SA Process requires the identification of key sustainability issues and problems facing the Strategic Area which assist in the finalisation of a set of relevant Sustainability Objectives.

Sustainability Objectives are also drawn from an amalgamation of the SA Scoping Report of each authority's Local Plan in order to align the separate SAs of both the Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans and individual Local Plans (representing Part 2 in each authority).

The appraisal of the Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans will be able to evaluate, in a clear and consistent manner, the nature and degree of impact and whether significant effects are likely to emerge from the Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plan's proposed content.

### 2.2 The Issues and Objectives

The following table outlines the stages which led to the formulation of the Sustainability Objectives for the Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans, which were based on key sustainability issues and considerations for the whole Strategic Area. It also sets out the state of the environment that could be expected in the absence of the Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans.

**Table 1: Key Sustainability Issues and Sustainability Objectives**

Key Issues	Description / Supporting Evidence	Sustainability Objective (SO)
Social integration	Some of the highest increases in populations county-wide are forecast to be in Colchester Borough and Tendring District and there is a need to integrate new communities with existing ones.	1) Create safe environments which improve quality of life, community cohesion
Quality of life	Tendring has the highest level of deprivation for a local authority within Greater Essex.	
Population growth	The latest population trend data shows that the population in the HMA area is growing annually.  The area's population has been projected to increase (ONS, 2014) to 2021. Some of the highest increases in populations county-wide are forecast to be in Colchester Borough and Tendring District.	2) To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, safe home which meets their needs at a price they can afford
The need for specific housing types	There is an identified need for more starter homes and housing for older people.	
Affordable housing	In 2014/15, 3.8% of the net dwelling completions, which accounts for 10 dwellings, were affordable within Tendring, as opposed to 73.9% in Braintree and 40.0% in Colchester. This data indicates that affordable housing is an issue, particularly in Tendring and to a lesser extent, in Colchester.	

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Key Issues	Description / Supporting Evidence	Sustainability Objective (SO)
Ageing population	The population structure in Colchester is more weighted towards 20-44 year olds, similar to the trends in Braintree but with less dominance in this age group. Contrastingly, Tendring has a higher population of people aged over 65. This age group is also predicted to increase over Local Plan periods.	
Gypsy and Traveller requirements	Tendring has seen no increase in Gypsy and Traveller provisions since January 2014. Caravan counts in Braintree have increased since January 2014, but with fluctuations in measuring periods between 2014 and 2016 due to unauthorised sites being removed from the statistics, presumably due to eviction or inclusion in the statistics for tolerated sites. A similar trend is apparent in Colchester.	
Healthcare services	Health services in the Strategic Area are either underprovided or otherwise oversubscribed. Life expectancy of residents within Tendring District is lower than the regional and national averages with men living for an average of 78.7 years and women on average living 82.0 years. Braintree and Colchester have higher life expectancies for men and women than the national figures, but are both below the regional figures.	3) To improve the health of the District's residents and mitigate/reduce potential health inequalities
Participation in sport and obesity	Participation in sport has seen a reduction in Tendring and Colchester, and Braintree also has reduced overall since 2012-13. In addition, obesity in Tendring is more prevalent than Braintree, Colchester, the region and the nation.	
Business start ups	Compared to sub-national and national figures, Tendring district has experienced a lower start up rate and a lower de-registration rate of businesses indicating a slightly less robust local economy. Braintree and Colchester are more in line with the county and national business registration and de-registration rates.	4) To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy that creates new jobs, improves the vitality and viability of centres and captures the economic benefits of international gateways
Rural employment	Tendring District is predominantly rural in nature; however the majority of businesses are located in an urban location. The majority of businesses in Colchester are in urban areas.	
Commuting patterns	All the authorities registered significant proportions of residents travelling outside to other local authority areas to find employment. Just 59.9% of residents in Braintree remained in the District for their work, which was the lowest percentage of the Districts and Boroughs. Tendring was the next highest, followed by Colchester with the lowest proportion of residents travelling elsewhere for employment.	

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Key Issues	Description / Supporting Evidence	Sustainability Objective (SO)
International and European wildlife designations	In the Plan Area there are a number of Ramsar sites which include Hamford Water, and parts of the Colne and Blackwater estuaries which include coastal areas, estuaries, rivers and lakes/reservoirs. These Ramsar sites are also SPAs. There is also one 1 SAC in the area: a large coastal area known as Essex Estuaries	5) To value, conserve and enhance the natural environment, natural resources, biodiversity and geological diversity
National and local wildlife designations	There are a number of National Nature Reserves, SSSIs, Local Wildlife Sites and Local nature Reserves in the strategic area.	
Car ownership	Tendring and Colchester are above the regional and national averages for households owning 1 or more cars, in contrast with Braintree which is lower.	6) To achieve more sustainable travel behaviour, reduce the need to travel and reduce congestion
Congestion	Congestion is common on specific sections of the Council-managed network.	
Air quality	There are a number of AQMAs in Colchester	
Congestion and interconnectivity	There are network efficiency issues on a number of strategic inter-urban routes which are operating at or near to capacity. The Government-managed A12 has recognised issues with poor reliability and delays.	7) To promote accessibility, ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land, and ensure the necessary transport infrastructure to support new development
Transport infrastructure	There is a strategic need for transport infrastructure improvements associated with the A12 and A120	
Rural transport	The strategic area is largely rural in nature, and rural public transport services and interconnectivity is poor.	
Educational achievement	Tendring on average has lower proportions of students achieving KS4 results across all measures when compared with Braintree and Colchester. This trend extends to adult qualifications, where Braintree and Colchester are above regional and national averages for adults with NVQ1 level qualifications or higher. In general, Tendring has a less educated population than Braintree, Colchester, the sub region and nation.	8) To improve the education and skills of the population
School capacity	School capacities are forecast to be in deficit, when adjusted for new housing requirements	
Heritage assets at risk	According to the Heritage at Risk Register (2016), there are 15 assets listed as being at risk in Tendring. This consists of 7 Scheduled Monuments, 4 Listed Buildings and 4 Conservation Areas. There are 7 assets listed as being at risk in Braintree. This	9) To conserve and enhance historic and cultural heritage and assets and

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Key Issues	Description / Supporting Evidence	Sustainability Objective (SO)
	consists of 3 Scheduled Monuments, 2 listed places of worship and 2 Conservation Areas. There are 10 assets listed as being at risk in Colchester. This consists of 4 Scheduled Monuments, 2 listed places of worship, 1 Listed Building and 3 Conservation Areas.	townscape character?
Listed buildings	There is a concentration of listed buildings in the district of Braintree and also around historic towns such as Colchester.	
Historic towns	Colchester is the country's oldest town and the historic environment should be effectively protected and valued for its own sake, as an irreplaceable record which contributes to our understanding of both the present and the past.	
Renewable energy use	Tendring District, Colchester Borough and Braintree District all consume more energy from non-renewable sources as a percentage of their consumption compared to the East of England as a whole	10) To make efficient use of energy and reduce contributions to climatic change through mitigation and adaptation.
Water scarcity and management	Water management is challenging given the combination of high development growth and it being one of the driest counties in England. In respect of water quantity a significant portion of the resource is considered to be 'water stressed'; the resource availability status of rivers and aquifers show that they are generally over abstracted; and not self-sufficient in relation to local sources of water supply and needs to import substantial quantities of water to satisfy existing demand	11) To improve water quality and address water scarcity and sewerage capacity
Fluvial flood risk	Although flooding cannot be completely prevented, its impacts can be avoided and reduced through effective planning and land management. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, but where development is necessary, to ensure that it is safe and does not increase flood risk elsewhere.	12) To reduce the risk of fluvial, coastal and surface water flooding
Surface water flood risk	Surface water flood risk is relatively high with all main settlements assessed being ranked in the top 1,000 settlements most susceptible to surface water flooding.	
Coastal flood risk	Significant levels of flood risk have been identified along the Essex coast and inland along river stretches.	
Air quality	There have been general reductions on the average energy consumption on roads in the area. Similar reductions are apparent	13) To improve air

Key Issues	Description / Supporting Evidence	Sustainability Objective (SO)
	on the majority of roads throughout all authorities with the exception of minor roads in Colchester.	quality
AQMAs	There are a large number of AQMAs in the town of Colchester.	
AONB pressures	There is one AONB, Dedham Vale, which lies on the border of Suffolk and Essex in Colchester Borough covering an area of 90 sq km. It has been designated such because it is an exceptional example of a lowland river valley and plans are being explored to extend this designation westward.	14) To conserve and enhance the quality of landscapes
Agricultural land and soil quality	There are significant areas of Grade 1 agricultural land within Tendring, and smaller areas within Colchester Borough.	15) To safeguard and enhance the quality of soil and mineral deposits?
Preserving mineral deposits	The area has extensive deposits of sand and gravel. The sand and gravel resources in Essex are significant in national, sub-national and local terms - Essex is one of the largest producers in the UK; most geographically extensive and significantly mixed within the centre and north of Essex – namely the districts of Uttlesford, Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester and Tendring.	

### 2.3 The Approach to Assessing Policies within the Sustainability Appraisal

The following framework sets out the method for the assessment of the Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plan’s policies, building on the Sustainability Objectives previously highlighted.

**Table 2: Sustainability Framework for Assessing the Level of Growth & Strategic Objective Options**

SA Objective	SA Criteria
1) Create safe environments which improve quality of life, community cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does it seek to improve / supply community facilities for young people?</li> <li>- Does it seek to increase cultural activities or suitable development to stimulate them?</li> <li>- Does it seek to support cultural identity and social inclusion?</li> <li>- Will there be measures to increase the safety and security of new development and public realm?</li> </ul>
2) To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, safe home which meets their needs at a price they can afford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will it increase the range and affordability of housing to support the growing population and for all social groups?</li> <li>- Does it respond to the needs of an ageing population?</li> <li>- Does it seek to provide appropriate rural affordable housing?</li> <li>- Will it deliver well designed and sustainable housing?</li> <li>- Will it contribute to meeting Gypsy and Traveller pitch requirements of the GTAA?</li> </ul>

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SA Objective	SA Criteria
<p>3) To improve the health of the District's residents and mitigate/reduce potential health inequalities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will it ensure access to health facilities?</li> <li>- Will it ensure access to sport and recreation facilities, open space and accessible green space?</li> <li>- Will it encourage access by walking or cycling?</li> </ul>
<p>4) To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy that creates new jobs, improves the vitality and viability of centres and captures the economic benefits of international gateways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will it improve the delivery of a range of employment opportunities to support the growing population?</li> <li>- Will it tackle employment associated deprivation?</li> <li>- Does it seek to prevent loss of retail and other services in rural areas?</li> <li>- Does it promote and enhance the viability of existing centres by focusing development in such centres?</li> <li>- Will it enhance the area's potential for tourism?</li> <li>- Will it promote development of the ports?</li> <li>- Will it encourage the rural economy and diversification of it?</li> <li>- Will it support business innovation, diversification, entrepreneurship and changing economies?</li> </ul>
<p>5) To value, conserve and enhance the natural environment, natural resources, biodiversity and geological diversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will development have a potential impact on a national, international or European designated site (SPA, SAC, Ramsar, SSSI)?</li> <li>- Will it maintain and enhance sites otherwise designated for their nature conservation interest?</li> <li>- Will it conserve and enhance natural/semi natural habitats?</li> <li>- Will it conserve and enhance species diversity, and in particular avoid harm to indigenous BAP priority species?</li> </ul>
<p>6) To achieve more sustainable travel behaviour, reduce the need to travel and reduce congestion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will it increase and/or improve the availability and usability of sustainable transport modes?</li> <li>- Will it seek to encourage people to use alternative modes of transportation other than private vehicle?</li> <li>- Will it lead to the integration of transport modes?</li> <li>- Will it improve rural public transport?</li> <li>- Does it seek to increase the uptake or viability of walking and cycling as methods of transportation, through new infrastructure or integration?</li> </ul>
<p>7) To promote accessibility, ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land, and ensure the necessary transport infrastructure to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will it contribute positively to reduce social exclusion by ensuring access to jobs, shopping, services and leisure facilities for all?</li> <li>- Does it seek to concentrate development and facilities where access via sustainable travel is greatest?</li> <li>- Does it seek to minimise congestion at key destinations / areas that witness a large</li> </ul>

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SA Objective	SA Criteria
support new development	amount of vehicle movements at peak times? - Would the scale of development require significant supporting transport infrastructure in an area of identified need?
8) To improve the education and skills of the population	- Does it seek to improve existing educational facilities and/or create more educational facilities? - Does it seek to improve existing training and learning facilities and/or create more facilities? - Will the employment opportunities available be mixed to suit a varied employment skills base? - Will new housing be supported by school expansion or other educational facilities where necessary?
9) To conserve and enhance historic and cultural heritage and assets and townscape character?	- Will it protect and enhance designations, features and areas of historical, archaeological and cultural value in both urban and rural areas? - Will it have a negative impact on the significance of a designated historic environment asset or its setting? - Does it seek to enhance the range and quality of the public realm and open spaces? - Will it reduce the amount of derelict, degraded and underused land? - Does it encourage the use of high quality design principles to respect local character? - Will / can any perceived adverse impacts be reduced through adequate mitigation?
10) To make efficient use of energy and reduce contributions to climatic change through mitigation and adaptation.	- Will it reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by reducing energy consumption? - Will it lead to an increased generation of energy from renewable sources? - Will it encourage greater energy efficiency? - Will it improve the efficient use of natural resources, minimising waste and promoting recycling?
11) To improve water quality and address water scarcity and sewerage capacity	- Will it lead to no deterioration on the quality of water bodies? - Will water resources and sewerage capacity be able to accommodate growth?
12) To reduce the risk of fluvial, coastal and surface water flooding	- Does it promote the inclusion of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in new developments and will their integration be viable? - Does it seek to avoid development in areas at risk of flooding (fluvial, coastal, surface water)? - Does it seek to avoid increasing flood risk (fluvial, surface water, groundwater) in areas away from initial development?
13) To improve air quality	- Will it improve, or not detrimentally affect air quality along the A12 or A120?

SA Objective	SA Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does it direct growth away from AQMAs?</li> <li>- Does it seek to improve or avoid increasing traffic flows generally?</li> </ul>
14) To conserve and enhance the quality of landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will landscapes sensitive to development be protected?</li> <li>- Will it lead to rural expansion or development outside development boundaries/limits that increases coalescence with neighbouring settlements?</li> <li>- Is the scale / density of development in keeping with important and valued features of the local landscape?</li> </ul>
15) To safeguard and enhance the quality of soil and mineral deposits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will it avoid the loss of high quality agricultural land?</li> <li>- Will it avoid the sterilisation of mineral deposits / is the site within a Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA)?</li> <li>- Will it support or lead to the remediation of contaminated land, avoiding environmental pollution or exposure of occupiers or neighbouring land uses to unacceptable health risk?</li> </ul>

The strength of impacts can vary dependant on the relevance of the policy content to certain sustainability objectives or themes. Where the policies have been appraised against the Sustainability Objectives the basis for making judgements within the assessment is identified within the following key:

Possible impact	Basis for judgement
++	Strong prospect of there being significant positive impacts
+	Strong prospect of there being minor positive impacts
+/?	Possibility of either positive or negative impacts, or general uncertainty where there is a lack on current information (to be elaborated in commentary in each instance)
0	No impact
N/A	Not applicable to the scope or context of the appraised content
-	Strong prospect of there being minor negative impacts and mitigation would be possible
--	Strong prospect of there being significant negative impacts with mitigation unlikely to be possible (pending further investigation)

## 2.4 The Approach to Assessing Sites within the Sustainability Appraisal

The following framework sets out the methodology for the appraisal of sites within the Sustainability Appraisal. It stems from a number of Garden City Principles which have been developed by the Town and County Planning Association (TCPA) for the assessment of large sites, in this case called 'Garden Communities,' in order to explore and maximise their

sustainability.

The framework sets out the relevant TCPA Garden City Principles and any other considerations required. This framework has been developed in order to capture each principle of a successful Garden Community, with evidence of local considerations in the area of the three authorities.

**Table 3: Sustainability Framework for Assessing Garden Community Options**

Objective	Corresponding Garden City Principle(s) and any additional considerations
1. Physical Limitations – Absence of insurmountable problems (e.g. access, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution, contamination and air quality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Absence of insurmountable problems (ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution, contamination and air quality)</li> <li>- Incorporation of SUDS.</li> </ul>
2. Impacts – Acceptable impacts on high quality agricultural land, important landscape features, townscape features, sites of nature conservation interest and heritage assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflect a fusion of the best of the past while embracing new materials and the needs of modern living</li> <li>- Acceptable impacts only on sites of nature conservation interest.</li> <li>- A surrounding belt of countryside to prevent sprawl, well connected and biodiversity rich public parks, and a mix of public and private networks of well-managed, high-quality gardens, tree-lined streets and open spaces.</li> <li>- Acceptable impacts only on high quality agricultural land, important landscape features.</li> </ul>
3. Environment/Amenity – Acceptable relationship with and impact on occupiers of existing properties and neighbouring areas/towns (maintaining adequate separation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acceptable relationship only with and impact on occupiers of existing properties and neighbouring areas / towns (maintaining adequate separation)</li> </ul>
4. Transport – Incorporation of integrated and accessible sustainable transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New Garden Cities should be located only where there are existing rapid public transport links to major cities, or where real plans are already in place for its provision.</li> <li>- Walking, cycling and public transport should be the most attractive and prioritised forms of transport in the garden city.</li> <li>- Ensure a comprehensive and safe network of footpaths and cycleways throughout the development, and public transport nodes within a short walking distance of all homes.</li> <li>- Where car travel is necessary, consideration should be made of shared transport approaches such as car clubs.</li> </ul>
5. Resilience - Positive contribution towards maintaining resilient town centres and identified regeneration and development priority areas and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Positive contribution towards town centres.</li> <li>- Positive contribution towards identified regeneration priority</li> </ul>

Objective	Corresponding Garden City Principle(s) and any additional considerations
institutions (including Essex University)	areas and institutions
<p>6. Housing – Provision of a mix of tenures, including affordable homes and a range of housing types (including self-build/custom build and gypsy and traveller pitches).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Garden Cities (should be) part of a wider strategic approach to meeting the nation’s housing needs.</li> <li>- An appropriate number homes in a new Garden City must be ‘affordable’ for ordinary people.</li> <li>- Provide mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are genuinely affordable for everyone</li> <li>- An appropriate percentage of the homes that are classified as ‘affordable’ must be for social rent.</li> <li>- Consider life-time homes and the needs of particular social groups, such as the elderly.</li> <li>- A range of housing types including self-build / custom build and gypsy and traveller pitches</li> <li>- Aspire to the very best domestic and commercial architecture with sensitivity to local vernacular design and materials.</li> <li>- New Garden Cities should include opportunities for people to build their own home (either alone or collectively), and set aside land for future community needs.</li> </ul>
<p>7. Employment Opportunities – Provision for a wide range of local jobs within easy commuting distance from homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New Garden Cities must provide a full range of employment opportunities, with the aim of no less than one job per new household being easily accessible</li> <li>- There should be a robust range of employment opportunities in the Garden City itself, with a variety of jobs within easy commuting distance of homes.</li> </ul>
<p>8. Mixed-use Opportunities – Inclusion of cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusion of cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods</li> </ul>
<p>9. Environmental Quality &amp; Sustainability – Incorporation of generous areas of publicly accessible open space, allotments/food production areas, biodiversity gains, SUDS and zero-carbon/energy-positive technology to ensure climate resilience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create shared spaces for social interaction and space for both formal and informal artistic activities, as well as sport and leisure activities.</li> <li>- Strong emphasis should be placed on homes with gardens and on space for both allotments and community gardens and orchards to provide for healthy local food.</li> <li>- Garden Cities are places of cultural diversity and vibrancy with design contributing to sociable neighbourhoods. This means, for example, shaping design with the needs of children’s play, teenage interests and the aspirations of elderly</li> </ul>

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Objective	Corresponding Garden City Principle(s) and any additional considerations
	<p>in mind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Net gain to biodiversity is secured through master plans which link generous private and community gardens with wider public green and blue space and ultimately with strategic networks of green infrastructure and habitat creation.</li> <li>- Garden Cities must demonstrate the highest standards of technological innovation in zero carbon and energy positive technology to reduce the impact of climate emissions.</li> <li>- In building standards, a requirement for innovation beyond zero carbon and in the use of materials and construction techniques.</li> </ul>
<p>10. Developability / Deliverability - The growth area is available, commercially attractive, and capable of delivering necessary physical/social/green infrastructure and could be viably developed within [6-10] years.</p> <p>Satisfactory mechanisms are in place to capture increase in land value to meet infrastructure costs and manage and maintain assets in the long term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capture rising land values created by the development of the town can repay infrastructure costs</li> <li>- Be commercially attractive with strong market conditions and value potential</li> <li>- Availability of land being put forward for development with active landowner/developer interest</li> <li>- Scope for delivery structures through active and positive public and private sector engagement</li> </ul>

The basis for making judgements within the assessment of Garden Communities is identified within the following key:

Possible impact	Basis for judgement
++	Strong prospect of fully meeting criteria with significant wider benefits
+	Reasonable prospect of fully meeting criteria
+/?	Reasonable prospect of partially meeting criteria
-	Unlikely to fully meet criteria however mitigation possible regarding impacts
--	Unlikely to meet criteria without significant negative impacts (pending further detailed investigation regarding mitigation)

### 3 The Appraisal of the Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans

#### 3.1 Key points from the assessment of policies SP1-SP7

The following table sets out the combined long term sustainability impacts assessed in the individual appraisal of each policy as well as that of the Vision and the Strategic Objectives of the Common Strategic Part 1 for Plans.

Policy	Sustainability Objectives (SO)														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Vision	N/A	++	++	++	++	++	++	N/A	++	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Objs	+	++	++	++	N/A	++	++	++	+	+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SP1	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
SP2	N/A	++	N/A	++	N/A	N/A	N/A	+	N/A						
SP3	N/A	++	N/A	++	N/A	N/A	N/A	++	N/A						
SP4	N/A	N/A	++	++	0	++	++	++	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SP5	++	N/A	+	N/A	+	++	++	N/A	+	+	++	+/?	+	0	N/A
SP6	+	++	++	++	+/?	++	++	++	+	+	N/A	N/A	+	+/?	N/A
SP7	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	++	+/?	+	++	+	+	+	0

The following key points can be made regarding the appraisal of the preferred options:

- The strategic vision for the area will have short and medium term positive impacts on housing and employment related Sustainability Objectives (SO2 and SO4 respectively). The significance of these impacts will increase in the long term with the principle of sustainable Garden Communities being developed as part of a sustainable strategy for growth and in response to objectively assessed housing and employment needs, and also their wider benefits. This will also be the case for health (SO3), the natural environment (SO5), and the historic environment (SO9) through the provision of green infrastructure, new and expanded education and health care facilities and recreational land and also the protection and enhancement of countryside and heritage assets. There will additionally be significant long term impacts on ensuring the necessary transport infrastructure to support new development (SO7) in line with the emergence of the Garden Communities in the latter stages of the three authorities' Local Plan periods.
- There will be positive impacts associated with housing need (SO2) targets and also employment growth (SO4), progressing to significant positive impacts in the long term associated with the requirement that Garden Communities be forthcoming to meet residual or unmet need. This is due to the number of new homes being needed to provide sufficient labour to meet the number of forecast jobs, as per the methodology behind the identification of the need in the OAN Report, and the need to provide a range of employment opportunities in association with Garden City Principles.

- Employment forecasts have an underlying principle: that planning for housing, economic land uses and community facilities / services should be integrated, so that the demand for labour is fulfilled and there is no unsustainable commuting. The principle of these links to identifying future job growth to housing provision is a key tenet of sustainability and as such, there will be further significant positive impacts associated with employment and housing.
- The principles behind the Spatial Strategy will have a large number of significant positive impacts on the Sustainability Objectives, most notably on those that correspond to housing delivery (SO2), economic growth (SO4) and accessibility (SO7). The short and medium term impacts of these are related to the notion that development will be accommodated within or adjoining settlements according to their scale and existing role both within each individual district; these correspond to the NPPF requirements of each LPA in the formulation of a Local Plan and offers a local distinctiveness to the strategic area relevant to local needs and communities.
- Further long term significant positive impacts associated with Garden Communities can be expected to be realised on health (SO3), through the integration and requirement of suitable facilities and open space and recreation requirements; sustainable travel (SO6) through the requirements of sustainable transportation means to be provided, and education and skills (SO8) through the provision of primary, secondary and early years facilities as per Garden City Principles and Essex County Council infrastructure requirements.
- Minor positive impacts can be expected through Garden Community developments associated with townscapes (SO9) through a combined alleviation of pressures on existing settlements at the expected scale and also in conjunction with design expectations and opportunities. This focus away from the expansion of existing settlements will also not alleviate air quality pressures in settlements (SO13) and also offer opportunities for renewable energy generation (SO10).
- Uncertain impacts can be expected to arise from the principle of Garden Communities regarding the natural environment (SO5) and landscapes (SO14) through the development of green field land, however it should be acknowledged that at the specified scale, and commensurate with the density requirements of Garden City Principles, Garden Communities are capable of mitigating such concerns effectively and can even lead to opportunities regarding biodiversity gain.
- There will be significant positive impacts associated with those Sustainability Objectives related to infrastructure delivery that would specifically be related to strategic level growth and stimulated by it across the Strategic Area; these being health (SO3), sustainable transport (SO6) and education (SO8).
- Policy SP6 could be more explicit as to the requirements of new development in regards to the historic environment and assets (SO9) and also possible biodiversity gain (SO5). The Policy could also respond to aspirations to increase renewable energy generation (SO10) in strategic scale development opportunities. There is also scope for the policy to include principles related to surface water flood risk (SO12) and in particular SuDS; for this reason uncertain impacts have been highlighted at present. It should be acknowledged however that significant positive impacts can be expected to arise from relevant individual LPA Local Plan policies, which can also respond better to requirements for local distinctiveness in that

context.

- Heritage assets exist across all of the broad Garden Community areas; additionally the sites could potentially contain archaeological remains that would need to be excavated. In consideration of this, Policy SP7 could include a principle that Masterplans seek ways to achieve quality and active management of heritage assets and the historic environment as part of a positive strategy for their conservation and enjoyment.

### 3.2 Key points from the assessment of Garden Community options

Options have been identified through the three authorities' respective Local Plan call-for-sites processes. The threshold for the identification of what constituted a reasonable Garden Community option was 4,000 dwellings based on that of the threshold for the required provision of a new secondary school; a key building block for a community of sufficient scale for residents to meet majority of day to day needs.

The following represent all of the Garden Community options that were proposed by developers / landowners within the Strategic Area (please note that the indicative yields presented are for each option in its entirety and beyond those which can be delivered in the Plan period):

Option	Sub-Option	Reference number for purposes of assessment	Indicative dwelling yield and amount of mixed use / employment land (ha)	Reason for selection / rejection
East Colchester	Option 1: Southern Land Focus	GCEC1	- 6,611 homes - 7 ha mixed use - 5 ha employment land	The broad area of East Colchester has been selected as a preferred option for a new Garden Community due to its ability to stimulate required infrastructure delivery and adhere to Garden City Principles in a largely unconstrained area.
	Option 2: A133 to Colchester - Ipswich rail line	GCEC2	- 8,834 homes - 10 ha mixed use - 5 ha employment land	
	Option 3: North to South wrap	GCEC3	- 11,409 homes - 13 ha mixed use - 7 ha employment land	
North Colchester	Option 1: East of Langham Lane focus	GCNC1	- 6,606 homes - 7 ha mixed use - 7 ha employment land	The broad area of North Colchester has been rejected as a preferred option for a new Garden Community due to the limited scope for maximum sustainable benefits associated with adhering to Garden City principles.
	Option 2: Maximum Land Take	GCNC2	- 10,132 homes - 10 ha mixed use - 10 ha employment land	
West of Colchester /Marks	Option 1: North and South of A12 / Rail Corridor Focus	GCWC1	- 16,861 homes - 9 ha mixed use	The broad area of West of Colchester / Marks Tey has been selected as a preferred

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Option	Sub-Option	Reference number for purposes of assessment	Indicative dwelling yield and amount of mixed use / employment land (ha)	Reason for selection / rejection
Tey			- 10 ha employment land	option for a new Garden Community due to its ability to stimulate required infrastructure delivery and adhere to Garden City Principles in a largely unconstrained area.
	Option 2: South of A120 and North of Marks Tey Existing Settlement	GCWC2	- 17,182 homes - 9 ha mixed use - 11 ha employment land	
	Option 3: South of A120 Focus	GCWC3	- 13,105 homes - 7 ha mixed use - 9 ha employment land	
	Option 4: Maximum Land Take	GCWC4	- 27,841 homes - 16 ha mixed use - 15 ha employment land	
West of Braintree	Option 1: Braintree DC only	GCWB1	- 9,665 homes - 12 ha mixed use - 10 ha employment land	The broad area of West of Braintree has been selected as a preferred option for a new Garden Community. As Uttlesford District Council are not currently contributing to the work undertaken by the North Essex Authorities, and are located within a different Housing Market Area, option GCWB2 can be rejected at this stage in so far as the option does not respond to the scope and context of the Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans.
	Option 2: Braintree DC and Uttlesford DC Land	GCWB2	- 12,949 homes - 16 ha mixed use - 13 ha employment land	

The appraisal of the Garden Community Options has been undertaken using all available information, including the findings of a Site Options and Performance Review undertaken by consultants AECOM, who have been commissioned to undertake a concept feasibility study on behalf of the North Essex Authorities.

The following table sets out the assessed sustainability impacts of all reasonable Garden Community options explored.

Garden Community Option	Sustainability Objectives (SO)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GCEC1	+/?	+/?	++	+	++	++	++	++	++	++
GCEC2	+/?	+/?	++	+	++	++	++	++	++	+
GCEC3	+/?	+/?	+	+/?	++	++	++	++	++	+
GCNC1	-	-	-	+/?	+	++	++	++	++	+/?
GCNC2	-	-	-	+/?	+	++	++	++	++	+/?
GCWC1	+/?	+/?	+/?	+	+	++	++	++	++	+/?
GCWC2	+/?	+/?	+/?	+	+	++	++	++	++	+/?
GCWC3	+/?	+	+/?	+	+	++	++	++	++	+/?
GCWC4	+/?	-	++	+/?	+/?	++	++	++	++	+/?
GCWB1	+	+/?	++	+/?	+/?	++	++	++	++	+
GCWB2	+	+/?	+	+/?	+/?	++	++	++	++	+

The following key points can be made regarding the appraisal of specific Garden Community options:

### 3.2.1 East Colchester Options: GCEC1 (Southern land Focus), GCEC2 (A133 to Colchester - Ipswich Rail Line) and GCEC3 (North to South wrap)

- Access will be dependent on the A120 and A133 and requires an access strategy. Regarding GCEC2 and GCEC3, the Great Eastern Mainline creates severance, bisecting movements to the North West (and south in regard to GCEC3); however there are three vehicular bridges in place which could be upgraded. Despite these considerations, the scale of the proposal has a reasonable prospect of overcoming them in meeting Garden City Principles.
- The valley slopes following Salary Brook can be utilised as green infrastructure.
- Surface water networks are at capacity, the Colchester Water Recycling Centre is near capacity (but can be expanded in response to developer demand) and gas and electricity network reinforcement would also be needed; however none of these limitations can be considered insurmountable of any proposal at the scale of the three options.
- All options contain Grade 1 Agricultural Land along much of the eastern boundary; however the requirements for a belt of countryside to prevent sprawl has scope for its protection.
- The existing natural landscape and ecological features within the options such as Salary

Brook, Welsh Wood, woodland, ancient woodland and a network of intact hedgerows and associated veteran trees, land drains and ditches, if protected, conserved and enhanced, have the potential to form key landscape structuring components of the Garden Community and related green infrastructure network.

- GCEC3 contains a SSSI (Bullock Wood) which is likely to require more sensitive consideration in regard to preservation and enhancement as part of a belt of countryside to prevent coalescence with Colchester.
- Options GCEC1 and GCEC2 will have positive impacts associated with the topography of the area constraining views into and across the sites, which are assessed as reducing the visual impacts of any Garden Community.
- The existing Local nature Reserves of Salary Brook and Welsh Wood create the basis of an established and high quality buffer between Colchester and any new Garden Communities to the west, and there are no other existing settlements to the east that would be affected by any of the options at their stated scales.
- Option GCEC3 has considerations regarding the A137 Harwich Road which bisects the small settlement of Fox Street. Maintaining a clear separation of this settlement may fragment the wider development, in particular that area to the north of the railway line.
- Regarding options GCEC1 and GCEC2, the presence of the Great Eastern Mainline and rail links at Hythe exist as a rapid public transport link to Colchester, ensuring that the principle of ensuring rail links exist; it would be likely however that a new station would be needed. In addition, existing strategic and local bus networks currently set down and pick-up in close proximity to both sites. Option GCEC3 has been assessed as having the same considerations, however due to the spatial size of the site it is likely that a further level of site wide connectivity will be required.
- All Options have all been assessed as making a significantly positive impact on the town centre of Colchester, due largely to the options' proximity to the town centre of Colchester, the University and identified regeneration areas in east Colchester. Access to the town centre railway station, accessible from the Hythe station at present and via other public transport means ensures that direct access to the town centre and regeneration areas in the east of the town centre has the potential to be maximised in a sustainable manner.
- All of the Garden Community Options can be expected to have significantly positive impacts on housing, employment, mixed-use development opportunities and the incorporation of generous areas of publicly accessible open space, allotments/food production areas, biodiversity gains, SuDS and zero-carbon/energy-positive technology at this stage, and are all indistinguishable in regard to the opportunities of each option to adhere to relevant Garden City Principles.
- It should be possible to commence development in the emerging plan period to 2032, with on and off-site infrastructure solutions identifiable and likely deliverable. Adequate lead-in time is considered to exist for the required planning, funding and delivery of major infrastructure works needed to accommodate the continued development and growth of the Garden Community beyond 2032. Options GCEC2 and GCEC3 are assessed as having more uncertainty regarding delivery in the plan period, due to increasing levels of fragmented land ownership associated with larger indicative scales of development; however the principle of these options being able to meet the aspirations of the sustainability objective and related Garden City Principles is not in question.

### 3.2.2 North Colchester Options: GCNC1 (East of Langham Lane Focus) and GCNC2 (Maximum Land Take)

- For both options site access will be reliant on the A12 and significant consideration will need to be given to how any Garden Community would relate to the A12, particularly in developing strategies which form an appropriate interface between the A12 and local roads. There will be a need to restrict unnecessary traffic flows which could increase congestion along this strategically important route.
- The functionality of any forthcoming development will be dependent upon bridging and facilitating sustainable linkages across the A12 connecting with Colchester to the south. GCNC2 could however benefit from an opportunity to access links with Straight Road which may provide greater flexibility in relation to the overall highway and related transport network for the new settlement as well as greater spread of traffic demand.
- Both options for North Colchester have a potentially significant constraint in the form of a 20 hectare Solar Farm within both areas, which exists with a 20 year planning permission. Although this could represent a benefit in regard to renewable energy generation for any new Garden Community, it equally constrains the options in regard to conforming to a number of wider Garden City Principles, particularly those related to high quality design and layouts, and green infrastructure which are not fragmented or limited in the scope of aspirations at the masterplanning stage.
- Anglia Water have identified major constraints in terms of providing infrastructure and/or treatment works to serve proposed growth at this location.
- Options GCNC1 and GCNC2 both include large areas of land identified as Grade 2 Agricultural Land, classed as 'very good' by Natural England, with GCNC2 having an additional proportion of Grade 1 'excellent' Agricultural Land.
- Although ecological assets exist throughout, both sites do not contain any wildlife designations, and so have scope to introduce these within proposals in conformity to Garden City principles.
- The landscape implications of both sites are considered significant; the eastern boundary of both sites border the Dedham Vale AONB and a development of this size has the potential to significantly impact on the character and setting of the AONB. It should also be considered that any potential extension of the AONB westward may be impacted by development at both these options.
- Both options have the potential to negatively impact on the existing settlements of Langham. In consideration of the location and size of the Solar Farm existing at Boxted Airfield, it is uncertain to what extent option GCNC1 could adequately ensure a degree of separation with Langham whilst simultaneously ensuring that wider Garden City Principles are met, where the extent of land available for housing and employment delivery is uncertain at this current time.
- Regarding the southern boundary of both options, it is likewise uncertain how separation can be guaranteed with Colchester and the Northern Gateway when considered alongside the need for such links to be forged to the benefit of the wider community and particularly for access and public transport links. Regarding this, it can be considered that these options are unlikely to benefit from a degree of separation from Colchester.
- Options GCNC1 and GCNC2 do not benefit from an existing rail link and in addition, the sites are severed by the A12 to the south, proving such integration unlikely to be suitable or

viable. With this in mind, it can be considered that only bus, walking and cycling opportunities appear valid until further information is known regarding these options.

- Should bridging of the A12 be possible, or existing bridges be upgraded, then access to wider public transport initiatives would be present to the Northern Gateway. In addition, a Park and Ride exists to the west corner of both sites which could be expanded or otherwise utilised.
- Links to the A12 and the strategic road network are likely to prove private car use attractive and it is uncertain whether there will be any benefits to the town centre through bus links only given the proximity and ease of access to out of town centres.
- Options GCNC1 and GCNC2 will have positive impacts associated with distances to the town centre, existing vehicular access and also existing access to park and ride services into the town centre; however these links, in addition to the presence of the Northern Gateway (including proposals for this area), and combined with the emergence of an expected district or neighbourhood centre at any Garden Community itself could cumulatively reduce the need for residents to access the town centre for services, convenience retail and leisure facilities.
- All of the Garden Community Options can be expected to have significantly positive impacts on housing, employment, mixed-use development opportunities and the incorporation of generous areas of publicly accessible open space, allotments/food production areas, biodiversity gains, SuDS and zero-carbon/energy-positive technology at this stage, and are all indistinguishable in regard to the opportunities of each option to adhere to relevant Garden City Principles.
- With both road access and utility infrastructure solutions in principle available, it should be possible to commence development within the next 6-10 years. However, the extent of development, especially beyond the plan period, will be dependent on the provision of significant new infrastructure, not least ensuring adequate bridge crossings of the A12 and the future of the Solar Farm which has planning permission for 20 years (beyond the plan period).
- The additional land put forward under GCNC2 was not included in the Colchester Borough Council Local Plan call-for-sites process, but it is understood that the majority is potentially capable of being brought forward and developed by the same promoter as the land under GCNC1. This however would not be all the land under GCNC2, and additional land searches etc. would be required to bring forward GCNC2 in its entirety. There would however be less potential for negative deliverability connotations surrounding the future of the Solar Farm under this option, associated with the larger scale and extent of land.

### **3.2.3 West of Colchester / Marks Tey Options: GCWC1 (North and South of A12 / Rail Corridor Focus), GCWC2 (South of A120 and North of Marks Tey Existing Settlement), GCWC3 (South of A120 Focus) and GCWC4 (Maximum Land Take)**

- Road infrastructure and junction access / capacity represent the main barriers to development, however it should be noted that the presence of the A12 and A120 are beneficial to development in this location providing local and regional connectivity. In addition, new highway infrastructure of a planned 3-lane widening of the A12 and the duelling of the A120 from Braintree to the A12 (incorporating a potential bypass of Marks

Tey) would make the principle of development in this location viable for further exploration.

- A significant transport infrastructure programme would be needed for all options to overcome localised connectivity issues surrounding an east/west severance due to the alignment of the A12 and Great Eastern Mainline rail route; however any successful proposal can be expected to offer significant wider benefits. This is a general issue surrounding all of the West Colchester / Marks Tey options; however they can reasonably be expected to increase commensurate to increasing scales.
- There is a possible need to relocate and expand the Marks Tey rail station; however the presence of an existing rail station merits this exploration and strategic scale growth at this broad location.
- All options have underground and overhead pipeline and cable routes which would likely require retention and the development of exclusion zones. These issues, and other considerations such as areas of Flood Risk Zone 3 in the broad area, are not considered insurmountable at the scale of growth explored for all options.
- All options include land that is identified as Grade 2 Agricultural Land. Of these options, GCWC3 can be seen to offer a smaller proportion of development on Grade 2 ALC,
- Options GCWC1, GCWC2 and GCWC4 contain the Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI, however its location at the north east boundary in each instance ensures that this designation can be protected and enhanced through the requirements of a surrounding belt of countryside to prevent sprawl. Option GCWC3 does not have any implications in this regard, although detailed proposals would have to be sensitive to the presence of Domsey Brook.
- Options GCWC2 and GCWC4 are in close proximity to a Scheduled Monument (a Roman villa 450m south of Warren's Farm to the north) and could affect the setting of this asset, however the specific impacts of the options, and their significance, would have to be subject to specialist assessment once more detailed masterplanning is forthcoming (and should these options be selected). Option GCWC1 does not extend as far north west in proximity to the Scheduled Monument as Options GCWC2 and GCWC4 as to warrant the same expected level of potential impact; however the same issues would have to be investigated. Option GCWC3 is assessed as unlikely to impact on this designation.
- All the options contain a small number of Listed Buildings, in reflection of the size of the proposals, and although impacts on their setting would have to be further investigated, it is believed that at this strategic level, the scope of all proposals ensures that impacts can be avoided.
- The landscape implications of the proposals vary commensurate to the scale of each proposal, with GCWC4 expected to have more significant impacts as GCWC1 and GCWC2, and GCWC3 expected to have minimal impacts in comparison to all the other options. The landscape character of the broad area is not particularly sensitive to change, with limited views associated with medium to large field patterns and mature hedgerows.
- All options will have varying different implications associated with settlement coalescence; these are largely commensurate to the different scales of the proposals. It should be noted however that coalescence can be prevented in all options with similarly varying degrees of countryside acting as a buffer.
- Impacts on the residential amenity of the settlements of Marks Tey and Little Tey are not as positive, with options GCWC1, GCWC2 and GCWC4 possibly assimilating the aforementioned settlements into the Garden Community. A buffer separation will likely be

needed to be developed through masterplanning to minimise certain impacts on existing communities, and it could be considered that the scope for this would be maximised through the larger option GCWC4 with enough available land to have limited knock on effects regarding adhering to other Garden City Principles. Option GCWC3 has been assessed as not having these specific considerations in addition to its required countryside belt protecting any properties to the south.

- The West Colchester / Marks Tey options all benefit from the presence of the Great Eastern Mainline running through the site, and also the existing rail station of Marks Tey. In addition, the infrastructure commitments regarding the A12 and A120 are likely to prove increased bus links suitable and viable options. Despite this, there is a possibility that these infrastructure improvements would warrant sustainable transport means less attractive in favour of private car journeys.
- Work will be required to adequately ensure the interconnectivity by sustainable means for all options.
- As an existing settlement, Marks Tey / Little Tey is already connected by public transport - both bus and rail (Marks Tey rail station) to Colchester, Braintree and other centres, including London. This is a clear advantage for developing a sustainable transport system for the Garden Community. It also provides the opportunity to connect the site with and support some form of inter-urban North Essex public transport system, such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) or similar.
- Specifically for option GCWC4, the scale of this option and the constrained location of the existing Marks Tey rail station limit any meaningful expansion of this facility, and it is considered that to provide a fully integrated and accessible sustainable transport system it will be necessary to relocate the railway station to a more central location within the Garden Community.
- Options GCWC1, GCWC2 and GCWC3 have been assessed as having positive impacts on the town centre of Colchester, and benefit from existing rail links at Marks Tey which can be expected to be expanded in line with any Garden Community option. Impacts are limited however due to the possibility of residents using the facilities of Tollgate in the first instance as preferable and closer to any Garden Community than the town centre of Colchester. Option GCWC4 has been assessed as having uncertain impacts partly for this reason, but also commensurate to its scale; the level of services and facilities required within this Garden Community option itself should reasonably be expected to be of a suitably large scale in order to be sustainable, however may reduce the number of expected journeys into Colchester for services, convenience retail and leisure facilities.
- All of the Garden Community Options can be expected to have significantly positive impacts on housing, employment, mixed-use development opportunities and the incorporation of generous areas of publicly accessible open space, allotments/food production areas, biodiversity gains, SuDS and zero-carbon/energy-positive technology at this stage, and are all indistinguishable in regard to the opportunities of each option to adhere to relevant Garden City Principles.
- It is believed that development could be commenced within the next 6-10 years, and make use of existing infrastructure to allow development to commence. Despite this, the extent of development will be heavily constrained (no more than 500-900 homes) without significant investment in the strategic road network (A120/A12). The deliverability of this site is

therefore directly linked to investment decisions and the development programme of Highways England.

### **3.2.4 West of Braintree Options: GCWB1 (Braintree DC Only) and GCWB2 (Braintree DC and Uttlesford DC Land)**

- Both options to the West of Braintree are away from the A120 and served from small rural lanes only, providing limited connectivity to the broad area. In addition, one such lane, 'Pods Lane' is a designated Protected Lane which, as additionally a heritage asset, would likely need to be integrated into any new Garden Community.
- Site access would generally be dependent on the A120 and B1256 from the south and limitations surrounding the allocated minerals site. An upgrade of the junction of the B1256 and Blake End would create a new access spur that avoids the quarry and is in principle considered possible. Overall, development of the broad area would require an access strategy that manages the interface between local and strategic traffic and restricts us of the rural lane network. Option GCWB2, in addition to these general considerations, may require additional solutions due to its larger scale of development. Regarding other physical limitations, both sites are considered relatively free of constraint, apart from those hedgerows, field ditches and woodland that can be integrated into any forthcoming masterplan.
- Options GCWB1 and GCWB2 both include land that is identified as Grade 2 Agricultural Land. Both options also include land allocated for minerals development within the adopted Minerals Local Plan (MLP). This land, in the south east portion of both options, is also identified as a flagship restoration scheme as part of MLP Policy S12; as a result, measures already exist to increase biodiversity gain on the site, and there are no perceived incompatibilities of this with the requirement of both GCWB1 and GCWB2 to provide a belt of countryside to prevent urban sprawl.
- Option GCWB2 includes the designation of Boxted Wood, a LoWS and Ancient Woodland whereas GCWB1 extends only up to its eastern extent. Due its location, and the requirement of the belt of countryside previously mentioned, the location of Boxted Wood is not considered an insurmountable issue to either option, however it is recommended that measures to conserve and enhance are sought through any eventual masterplanning, particularly for GCWB2.
- The northern boundary of both options abuts the Conservation Area of Great Saling which contains a range of listed buildings including grade II as well as the Registered Park and Garden of Saling Grove. Once more it is perceived that impacts are unlikely to be insurmountable and that the conservation or possible enhancement of the setting of these heritage assets can be ensured through adherence to Garden City Principles.
- Option GCWB2, in regard to its inclusion of the Great Saling airfield, may have archaeological implications, however further detail would be required as to the potential future of the airfield in any forthcoming masterplan.
- There are limited numbers of existing residential properties in the area of both options, however the small settlement of Blake End exists to the south west of the broad area and is located adjacent to a junction corresponding to the likely access to the area from the B1256. It should be noted that assimilation of Blake End is not assumed however, in so far as a required belt of surrounding countryside would act as a buffer, although there may be transport implications and perceived loss of amenity in that regard.

- Specifically in relation to GCWB2, additional considerations would be required in association with the amenity of residents in Stebbing Green and a desire to ensure separation. In isolation this is not considered an insurmountable issue however the presence of Boxted Wood within the area to the immediate east of any required buffer, could limit the suitability of this eastern part of the option.
- Both options do not benefit from an existing rail link and in addition links to the A120 and the strategic road network are likely to prove private car use attractive and it is uncertain whether there will be any benefits to the town centre through bus links only given the proximity and ease of access to Chelmsford and out of town centres such as Freeport.
- Connecting the options with Fitchway would provide direct links with Braintree and Braintree Railway Station. The establishment of links south of Fitchway would connect Skyline 120 for employment and Great Notley Country Park for leisure activity.
- Regarding public transport, the direct access of the site to the A120 can be considered advantageous in terms of connecting the site with North Essex inter-urban bus routes, providing connectivity with Stansted Airport and employment centres and the existing settlement.
- Options GCWB1 and GCWB2 have been assessed as having uncertain impacts on the town of Braintree. Positive impacts could reasonably be expected due to its close proximity and easy accessibility; however the lack of rail links to the centre and the similarly easy access to the strategic road network could see residents travelling to the larger centre of Chelmsford, or to Freeport to the south of Braintree but physically detached from the town centre.
- All of the Garden Community Options can be expected to have significantly positive impacts on housing, employment, mixed-use development opportunities and the incorporation of generous areas of publicly accessible open space, allotments/food production areas, biodiversity gains, SuDS and zero-carbon/energy-positive technology at this stage, and are all indistinguishable in regard to the opportunities of each option to adhere to relevant Garden City Principles.
- Options GCWB1 and GCWB2 have been highlighted as having constraints regarding the needs to invest in utility infrastructure, which consistent with the area's rural location is currently very limited in terms of physical networks and capacity. Option GCWB2 has additionally been highlighted as potentially allowing more flexibility regarding options for providing access from the A120/B1256 into the Garden Community, and commencing development of the new settlement relative to the operation and impact of the proposed quarry.

### 3.2.5 Cumulative Impacts of Garden Community Options

The following key points can be made regarding the cumulative appraisal of Garden Community options:

- It can be assumed that cumulative impacts could be realised on a small number of the Garden Community options through their geographic dispersal and scale. For instance, options that are grouped around the Colchester town area could give rise to cumulative negative impacts on accessibility, particularly a scenario where the larger East Colchester option (GCEC3) is progressed alongside either, but especially the larger, North Colchester option (GCNC2). These impacts can be expected to occur on the A12 and A120, particularly through disruption whilst any required upgrades to the strategic road network in north and east Colchester are being undertaken. There are also likely to be air quality impacts resulting from the selection of these options associated with the A12 and A120. It can also be expected that the selection of these two options would have negative impacts on landscapes and soil quality associated with the concentration of strategic development in north east Colchester.
- Regarding other options, it can be said that the geographic dispersal is such that no two other options would give rise to significant cumulative impacts that can not be mitigated at the strategic level, other than those associated with population increases more generally and in particular any resultant significant effects indicated as likely in a forthcoming Habitats Regulations Assessment or Appropriate Assessment.
- Although all impacts on the delivery of housing, employment and mixed-use development can be seen as significantly positive through the assessment of individual options, the cumulative impacts of focusing all required Garden Communities in the area of Colchester town (i.e. East Colchester, West Colchester and North Colchester options) can conversely be seen as negative across the HMA; there is a desire and requirement for strategic growth to supplement the growth requirements of the three authorities' Local Plans in order to address existing housing needs across the whole area and on a district level commensurate to the requirements of LPAs stated in the NPPF.

### 3.3 Key points from the assessment of policies SP8-SP10

Policies SP8-SP10 refer to aspirations or requirements of each preferred Garden Community, and as such have been appraised using the framework developed for the assessment of sites. The following key points can be made from the appraisal of Policies SP8-SP10:

- For all Policies SP8-SP10 there will be significant positive impacts associated with the majority of the Garden City principles, in consideration of each policy and the appraisal of relevant options within the assessment of Policy SP6. It should be noted that impacts are only relevant in the long term, associated with Garden Communities coming forward in the latter stages of the Plan period. Regarding Policy SP8, this also includes the impact on the regeneration areas within Colchester town centre and to the east of the town, due largely to the Policy content; in particular those related to sustainable transport, in conjunction with the general location of the option.
- An example where the policies will not ensure significant positive impacts against the Garden City Principles however relates to the aspiration that an appropriate percentage of homes that are classified as 'affordable' be for social rent. In addition, the policies are not explicit in a need to consider life-time homes; however do all include requirements for a mix

of housing types and tenures. Positive elements however include the requirements for Gypsy and Traveller provision in Policies SP9 and SP10.

- Another area where the policies are only highlighted as having minor positive impacts is regarding zero carbon and energy positive technology. It is considered however that such a principle would require further discussion with relevant service providers and is not a principle that can be established at this early stage in the plan-making process. It is also considered that should the Garden Communities not include renewable energy technologies, the benefits of the development would outweigh adherence to this aspiration.
- All Policies will only have minor positive impacts on agricultural land and landscapes due to the loss of agricultural land associated with Greenfield development.
- The commercial viability of all options can be broadly said to be progressively more positive from east to west associated with property values. Despite this, for the purposes of this appraisal, all options have been deemed as commercially attractive in line with their inclusion as reasonable options that are viable, deliverable and achievable.
- Regarding Policy SP9, despite requirements ensuring the protection and/or enhancement of biodiversity assets within and surrounding the site including the Domsey Brook and Roman River corridors, there will be only minor impacts associated with impacts on sites of nature conservation interest; this is due to no specific mention of Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI. Any site option explored in Policy SP6 would have some degree of impact on this designation, as indicated by being in the SSSI's Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) which requires consultation with Natural England.
- Regarding SP10, despite requirements ensuring the protection and/or enhancement of heritage assets within and surrounding the site including Great Saling Hall conservation area and areas of deciduous woodland within and adjoining the site, there will be only minor impacts associated with impacts on the Registered Park and Garden of Saling Grove. Both site options explored in Policy SP6 could be expected to have some degree of impact on this designation, and this would have to be factored into any Masterplan.
- It can be said that cumulative and synergistic impacts can not be identified of the Garden Community options due to their geographical spread across the HMA. Despite this, the benefits that extend to wider areas beyond the Garden Communities themselves can be seen to strengthen significantly through the three Garden Communities. Largely these impacts regard social and economic benefits, in both rural areas and supporting the town centres of Colchester and Braintree.
- In addition, cumulative impacts can be expected to be significant in accumulation with the 'Part 2' of each of the authorities' Local Plans, which will look to build on this long term strategic growth with short and medium term solutions on a non-strategic level.

### 3.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made throughout the appraisal of the Common Strategic Part 1 for Local Plans:

- Policy SP5 could be more explicit as to the requirements of new development in regards to the historic environment and assets and also possible biodiversity gain through green infrastructure. The Policy could also respond to aspirations to increase renewable energy generation in strategic scale development opportunities. There is also scope for the policy to regard surface water flood risk and in particular SuDS.
- Heritage assets exist across all of the Garden Community areas; additionally the sites could potentially contain archaeological remains that would need to be excavated. In consideration of this, Policy SP7 could include a principle that Masterplans seek ways to achieve quality and active management of heritage assets and the historic environment as part of a positive strategy for their conservation and enjoyment.
- At this stage of the plan-making process it can be considered that there is not sufficient information available for any of the Garden Community options to make detailed recommendations or suggest mitigation measures for individual sub-options. A general comment could be made however regarding the coverage or compatibility of the options against the sustainability objectives. The options will have to be carefully developed, through effective masterplanning, in order to positively adhere to issues surrounding physical limitations, in particular access arrangements to sites including strategies regarding permeability and interconnectivity within the new settlements.
- In addition, it can be seen that the majority of the Garden Community options will have considerations regarding a number of impacts associated with agricultural land, landscape, sites of nature conservation and the historic environment / heritage assets. It should again be acknowledged that such issues are not insurmountable at the scales of development proposed in the options and that effective masterplanning can even seek to enhance conditions. This is also true for issues surrounding existing residential amenity and coalescence, and the masterplanning process will have to seek to eradicate any negative impacts in this regard.
- Despite Policy SP9 requirements ensuring the protection and/or enhancement of biodiversity assets within and surrounding the site including the Domsey Brook and Roman River corridors, there is no specific mention of Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI. Any site option explored in Policy SP6 would have some degree of impact on this designation, as indicated by being in the SSSI's Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) which requires consultation with Natural England and this should be factored into any Masterplan.
- Despite Policy SP10 requirements ensuring the protection and/or enhancement of heritage assets within and surrounding the site including Great Saling Hall conservation area and areas of deciduous woodland within and adjoining the site, the policy could additionally mention the sensitivity of the Registered Park and Garden of Saling Grove. Both site options explored in Policy SP6 could be expected to have some degree of impact on this designation, and this would have to be factored into any Masterplan.

## 4 Next Steps

This Environmental Report will be subject to consultation. There are three statutory consultees that are required to be consulted for all Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment documents. These are:

- The Environment Agency;
- Natural England; and
- Historic England.

In addition to these, consultation will seek to engage the wider community in order to encompass comprehensive public engagement. The North Essex Authorities may additionally wish to invite comments from focussed groups, relevant stakeholders and interested parties.

### PLEASE NOTE:

All comments on the content of this Environmental Report should be sent to each authority's online portal in line with the consultation arrangements of each's Local Plan Preferred Options consultation. Where consultation periods differ between each authority, the following links may need to be checked once consultation periods are live.

Comments should be focused on the detail of this SA that pertains to land use implications or issues relevant to each local authority area.

Please check the following links for more information, and direction to relevant consultation portals:

#### Regarding Braintree District Council:

[https://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200137/consultations/96/contribute\\_to\\_a\\_council\\_consultation](https://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200137/consultations/96/contribute_to_a_council_consultation)

#### Regarding Colchester Borough Council:

<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/12650/Consultations>

#### Regarding Tendring District Council:

<http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/consultation>

## **5 Monitoring**

The significant sustainability effects of implementing a Local Plan must be monitored in order to identify unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action. The Sustainability Framework contained in this report includes suggested indicators in order to monitor each of the Sustainability Objectives, however these may not all be collected due to limited resources and difficulty in data availability or collection.

Guidance stipulates that it is not necessary to monitor everything included within the Sustainability Framework, but that monitoring should focus on significant sustainability effects, e.g. those that indicate a likely breach of international, national or local legislation, that may give rise to irreversible damage or where there is uncertainty and monitoring would enable preventative or mitigation measures to be taken.

Upon adoption Local Plans will be accompanied by an Adoption Statement which will outline those monitoring indicators most appropriate for future monitoring of the Plan in line with Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.



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