Where will the new development go?

On 15th July the Tendring District Council Local Plan Committee had its second meeting which was attended by approximately 100 local residents. The main topic under consideration was the overarching vision and strategy that will eventually determine where, in Tendring, the 12,000 new homes and 5,000 new jobs needed between now and 2031 will go.

Planning Officers’ recommended that the district’s largest developments should go on land in and around Clacton, Harwich and Weeley with the possibility of further large-scale development on land around the edge of Colchester and smaller developments in the district’s other towns and villages. Following considerable debate and having heard comments from local residents and Councillors from neighbouring Colchester Borough Council, the Committee gave its provisional agreement to this approach. Planning Officers have been asked to undertake further work, in consultation with the NHS, Essex County Council, utility companies and other relevant bodies, to come up with a more detailed proposal that will identify specific sites for possible inclusion in the Local Plan. The more detailed proposal will then be considered by the Committee at its next meeting on 30th September.

The suggested approach to development in different parts of the district is summarised below:

**Clacton:** Around 4,000 new homes to be built in Clacton to support growth in the service-sector economy with a large proportion of bungalows to cater for the town’s ageing population and its popularity for retirement. The largest developments to be on greenfield land off Jaywick Lane, near Clacton Coastal Academy and land north of Clacton Factory Outlet, accompanied by new schools, health care facilities and other community benefits.

**Harwich:** Around 1,000 new homes to be built in Harwich, mostly on small brownfield sites and medium-sized greenfield sites around Dovercourt and Ramsey, taking into account the town’s environmental constraints including flood risk and landscape sensitivity. The focus for development to be employment-led with continued support for port-related development at Bathside Bay and mixed-use development at the ‘Harwich Valley’ site off the A120, supplemented by business and industrial development further along the A120 at Horsley Cross.

**Weeley ‘Garden Village’:** 1,000 new homes to be built on greenfield land in the centre of the district at Weeley, accompanied by new shops, employment opportunities, a school and new health care facilities that would benefit residents of Weeley and surrounding villages. Most of the new housing would be family homes which would help meet the needs of our working families and commuters.

*continued overleaf*
**Colchester Fringe:** Planning Officers from Tendring District Council and Colchester Borough Council to work together to explore the possibility of major development on land around the eastern fringe of Colchester, crossing the Colchester/Tendring boundary which could help to bring high-tech and high-paid job opportunities associated with the expansion of Essex University along with new transport infrastructure and new homes that could help address the needs of both Colchester and Tendring.

**Tendring’s other towns and villages:** Approximately 900 homes to be built in and around Frinton, Walton and Kirby Cross with 700 around Manningtree, Lawford and Mistley and 200 in Brightlingsea. The district’s larger villages other than Weeley, including Alresford, Elmstead Market, Great Bentley, Little Clacton, St. Osyth and Thorpe-le-Soken, could see small to medium-sized developments. There would be no more than 50 homes on one site but the overall level of development could vary from village to village depending on different factors, including the capacity of local schools and environmental constraints. For smaller villages, development to be limited to small developments on ‘infill sites’, with generally no more than 10 homes on any one site.

To read the Planning Officer’s report which explains the recommended vision and strategy in more detail, along with the various alternative options that were considered, please click here (to open these links, some users may have to press ‘ctrl’ and click).

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**Colchester Borough Council begins work on its new Local Plan**

Our neighbouring authority Colchester Borough Council has begun work on a new Local Plan following the publication of its Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which suggests that Colchester might need 1,000 new homes a year for the next 20 years to address the future needs of its growing population – nearly 200 a year more than recent rates of development.

Colchester hopes to undertake some initial public consultation on possible options for development in early 2015 which should coincide with this Council’s public consultation on the new version of the Local Plan. Given the scale of new development needed in both Colchester and Tendring, it will be very important that both Councils work closely together to ensure that our Local Plans are compatible, that the need for housing over both areas is fully addressed and that we comply with the legal ‘duty to cooperate’.

To read the Planning Officer’s report which explains Colchester Borough Council’s position in more detail, please click here.

Officers will update the Local Plan Committee regularly, over the coming months, on Colchester’s progress and the ongoing cooperation between the two authorities.

**Paying for new infrastructure**

To help pay for the new roads, schools, surgeries, utilities and other infrastructure needed to support a growing population, Councils are allowed to seek financial contributions from developers through ‘Community Infrastructure Levy’ (CIL).

CIL involves charging developers so many £s per square metre of development. To read the Planning Officer’s report on this subject, please click here.

At the meeting on 15th July, the Local Plan Committee gave its provisional agreement to a planning policy for inclusion in the new Local Plan. It will enable the Council to use CIL to help pay for a range of facilities and infrastructure including schools, health care, emergency services, utilities, transport, open space, community facilities and coastal and flood defences.

The Committee has asked the Planning Officers to consider including a specific reference to the effect of the Council’s requirements for affordable housing on the Council’s ability to secure CIL. Officers will report this back to the next meeting of the Committee in September.
Thank you for your comments!

Following the first meeting of the Local Plan Committee in May, a new ‘Statement of Community Involvement’ (SCI) was published for consultation to allow Town and Parish Councils, residents and others to put forward their views on how communities should be notified, consulted and involved in planning matters in the future.

The consultation exercise ended earlier this month and we would like to thank everybody that made comments. On 15th July, the Council’s Planning Policy Manager updated the Local Plan Committee on the comments received and there will be a more detailed report, including any recommendations for how the SCI could be improved in light of these comments, later in the year.

Some of your suggestions included:

- making the document shorter and easier to understand for residents;
- making sure the document does not focus too much on the single issue of housing development;
- consider consultation for smaller planning applications, not just major schemes;
- using church magazines to publicise consultation exercises;
- having informal meetings with Town and Parish Councils and other community groups prior to the publication of planning documents;
- having public exhibitions in all areas affected by major development proposals in the Local Plan; and
- considering a longer consultation period than the statutory minimum of six weeks to ensure people have enough time to understand the proposals in the Local Plan and consider their response.

Delivering a choice of quality housing

One of the main requirements of government planning policy is for Councils to include policies in their Local Plans that promote the development of a choice of quality housing. On 15th July, the Local Plan Committee gave its provisional agreement to a series of policies for inclusion in the new plan which include:

**Housing Choice:** Delivering new homes across a range of size, type and tenure.

**Housing Density:** Ensuring the density of new homes is right for their location.

**Housing Standards:** Ensuring new homes meet, or exceed, minimum standards of internal space and garden sizes.

**Council Housing:** Securing affordable housing for local people with lower incomes that cannot afford to buy or rent housing on the open market.

**Rural Exception Schemes:** Providing opportunities for small affordable housing schemes on the edge of villages.

**Aspirational or Self-Build Homes:** Providing opportunities for larger homes of bespoke architectural design.

**HMOs and Bedsits:** Avoiding an over-concentration of ‘Houses in Multiple Occupation’ (HMOs) and bedsits in our town centres.

To read the Planning Officer’s report, please [click here](#).
Local Wildlife Sites

Essex Wildlife Trust and local residents’ raised concerns about the Council’s decision to remove the ‘Local Wildlife Sites’ (LoWS) designation from two sites in the Local Plan in January 2014’s ‘focussed changes’ consultation document. The Council’s Planning Policy Manager explained to the Local Plan Committee that, having checked with the Essex Wildlife Trust, this designation will need to be shown in the new version of the Local Plan. The sites affected were Walton Mere and land off St. Andrew’s Close, Alresford.

Only by following a process of re-surveying a site and demonstrating that there is no longer sufficient wildlife value to warrant LoWS status, can removal of the designation be justified. The Council does however have the power, through its Local Plan policies, to determine how much protection LoWS sites will be given if they are affected by proposals for development.

Other Essex Authorities also under pressure to plan for more homes

At the meeting of the Local Plan Committee on 15th July, the Council’s Planning Policy Manager gave an update on the progress of other Essex Councils’ progress on their Local Plans, particularly in response to the government’s policy to boost the supply of housing.

Maldon District Council had originally produced a Local Plan with sites to deliver around 213 new homes a year, but increased it to 294 homes a year following objections from neighbouring authorities concerned that the plan was not making sufficient provision for housing. The revised plan was submitted to the Secretary of State earlier this year. However the recent publication of a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for Maldon suggesting that 335 homes a year might be needed has led the Planning Inspector to organise an ‘exploratory meeting’ to determine whether or not the plan needs any further revisions to include additional land.

Elsewhere, Braintree District Council has decided to withdraw its draft Local Plan following the publication of its new SHMA which suggests that Braintree might need between 761 and 883 homes a year, as opposed to the 250 a year that were originally planned.

Tendring’s Planning Policy Manager was keen to point out that the experience of other authorities in Essex clearly demonstrates that the government is fully committed to delivering its policy for housing growth and that Planning Inspectors will reject Local Plans that fail to identify sufficient land to meet objectively-assessed housing needs.

Essex study of future gypsy and traveller provision to be published soon

At the meeting of the Local Plan Committee on 15th July, the Council’s Planning Policy Manager explained that a new ‘Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)’ prepared by consultants for all local planning authorities in Essex will be published soon. It will reveal the projected need for additional pitches, for gypsies and travellers, that Councils will be expected to plan for. The findings of the assessment and their implications for Tendring will be reported to the Local Plan Committee in September.

Date of next Local Plan Committee meeting: Tuesday 30th September 2014.

Time and venue to be confirmed.

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