

PLANNING POLICY AND LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

2 APRIL 2024

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (PLANNING)

A.1 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW: HIGH-LEVEL SPATIAL OPTIONS FOR LONG-TERM HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

(Report prepared by Gary Guiver and Paul Woods)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To seek the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee's comments on, and agreement to a series of initial high-level 'spatial options' for delivering any additional housing, business and industrial development across the district that might (subject to further assessment) be required, as a result of extending the timeframe of the Local Plan to 2041. These options would form part of the 'Issues and Options' public consultation exercise and would be tested as part of the 'Sustainability Appraisal' that must be produced alongside the review of the Local Plan. The testing and consideration of options will assist the Council in coming to a decision on a preferred option in due course – and once the likely level of future growth is properly established.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the review of the Local Plan, the Council will be revisiting its policies and proposals to guide growth in the Tendring District over an extended period to 2041. It is the Council's intention to update and improve the current Local Plan rather than re-write a new Plan completely from scratch, in line with the overarching principles agreed by the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee in December 2023. However, there could still be a need to top up the supply of housing and employment land to meet longer-term needs over the extended plan period. This will require the Council to consider reasonable options and to carry out a 'Sustainability Appraisal' in line with legal requirements of the planning system.

At this point in time, the number of additional homes and/or sites for employment-related development over the extended period of the Local Plan to 2041 is still a matter for further consideration and analysis. However, to progress the review of the Local Plan in a timely manner and ensure the Council completes all the necessary stages of the plan-making process ready to submit an updated Local Plan to the Secretary of State before June 2025, it will have to proceed, initially, on the basis of some high-level assumptions and options.

For housing development, the working assumption at this point in time is that the Council might need to plan for somewhere between 1,000 and 4,000 additional homes up to 2041 – over and above the

10,000 already planned for through the current Local Plan and sites already under construction or with planning permission.

For employment land, the working assumption is that whilst it is possible the current supply of land in the Local Plan (some 32 hectares) might be sufficient in quantitative terms to meet projected needs, there could be a case for widening the range of strategically located employment sites for business and industrial uses – particularly along the A120 and A133 corridors to maximise the opportunity to create new jobs, both off the back of growing interest for investment in the district following the designation of Freeport East and the commencement of development at Bathside Bay and Horsley Cross; but also increasing pressure for existing businesses to expand and become more energy efficient.

In a district as geographically diverse and complex as Tendring, the solution for meeting housing and employment needs are neither straightforward nor obvious and it is therefore necessary to consider different options as part of the Local Plan review process. Sustainability Appraisal is a valuable tool in assessing the environmental and social impacts of different options – but it is not necessary, nor practical to assess every conceivable option, scenario or permutation to arrive at a final outcome. It is however prudent to start with a sensible number of logical, distinguishable and high-level conceptual options that can be tested, refined and clarified as the plan-review progresses through its different stages.

The six high-level spatial options suggested by Officers are detailed within Appendix 1 to this report and can be summarised as follows:

Option 1: 'Urban Expansion' – an approach that directs all additional housing development to the district's 'urban areas', most notably Harwich & Dovercourt (reflecting the economic opportunities around Freeport status and development at Bathside Bay), with further growth also in and around Frinton, Walton & Kirby Cross; Manningtree, Lawford & Mistle; and (to a lesser extent) Brightlingsea (noting that Clacton and the proposed Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community are already identified as locations for considerable levels of housing development in the current Local Plan that will continue to 2041 and beyond).

Option 2: 'Hierarchy-Based Distribution' – a proportionate spread of development across all towns and most villages across the district with larger urban areas accommodating proportionately larger increases in housing than villages, and even the smaller villages with more limited services and facilities accommodating a share of new development.

Option 3: 'Metro Plan' – a radically different approach that directs all the additional development to land within 800m of railway stations on the branch line between Colchester and Walton – resulting in significant expansion of Alresford, Great Bentley, Thorpe le Soken and Kirby Cross, albeit of a scale that would be accompanied by new schools, health and community services and facilities.

Option 4: 'Freeport/Garden Village(s)' – an approach that involves the establishment of one or more entirely new 'Garden Villages' that could expand to up to 5,000 homes in the long-term beyond 2041 in strategically important locations on the district's transport network; alongside major expansion of Harwich & Dovercourt. The potential locations for a new village could include Fox Street, Frating, Horsley Cross, Weeley and Thorpe le Soken but would need to achieve a scale of development that would facilitate and deliver a full range of services and facilities as well as strategic infrastructure improvements that would benefit the wider district.

Option 5: 'Hybrid Strategy Approach' – which draws on elements of Options 1 to 4 by seeking to focus additional housing development through a combination of urban expansion, development in and around larger villages with railway stations and the establishment of a Garden Village in the Frating/Great Bromley area.

Option 6: A120 Freeport/Tendring Central Growth and Windfall Development – an approach that prioritises growth along the A120 corridor with expansion of Harwich & Dovercourt supported through the establishment of a new garden village in the Frating/Great Bromley area and limited small-scale development opportunities elsewhere.

Under each of the options 1 to 6, possible broad locations for new strategic employment sites along the A120 and A133 are identified in six locations: north of the proposed Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community, Frating, Little Bentley Horsley Cross, Weeley and Dovercourt/Parkeston – with the intention that each location is assessed in further detail, as part of an Employment Land study, to determine whether one, some or all could sensibly be included in an updated version of the Local Plan.

Each of the six high-level spatial options also gives an indication of the maximum number of additional homes that each location within the district might be able to accommodate over and above existing planned development. However, at this stage of the process the figures are purely indicative – based on an initial consideration of different scales and categories of residential and/or mixed-use development that might be reasonable. Detailed consideration of land availability, consultation feedback and technical analysis will most likely determine that some locations cannot accommodate or deliver the levels of development suggested; and, as a consequence, it is more than likely that the final strategy chosen by the Council will represent a refined variation on one or more of the high-level options set out in this report.

The process for reviewing the Local Plan will follow key stages that involve public consultation – the first of which will be the 'Issues and Options' stage where the Council will invite public comments on the potential broad direction of the Local Plan and the pertinent issues to be addressed through the review. It would be Officers' intention to include the six high-level spatial options as part of the Issues and Options consultation exercise to invite comments from residents, Town and Parish Councils, businesses, landowners, developers and other interested parties; along with any suggestions for alternative approaches. To assist the consultation exercise, each option is accompanied by Officers'

initial thoughts on some of the advantages and disadvantages of that approach – which can be expanded to take into account people’s comments and suggestions following public consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee:

- a) notes the content of this report;**
- b) considers and comments on the six alternative high-level spatial strategy options for long-term housing and employment land provision as contained within Appendix 1 to this report;**
- c) agrees that the high-level spatial strategy options, with any additional amendments discussed and agreed by the Committee, be included for public consultation in due course as part of the ‘Issues and Options’ stage of the Local Plan review process and for them to be tested as, necessary, as part of the Sustainability Appraisal and other technical analysis;**
- d) notes that any future decision on which option or combination of options will be included in the updated Local Plan will be informed by the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal, updates to other technical evidence and the feedback received both through public consultation and call-for-sites exercises; and**
- e) notes and acknowledges that the number of additional homes and the amount of additional employment land that might need to be planned for through the review of the Local Plan are, at this time, yet to be confirmed; and that the options set out in this report are based on high-level working assumptions that will be refined and clarified through further work carried out by specialist consultants.**

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Ensuring the District has an up-to-date Local Plan is a high priority for the Council and the review of the Local Plan is identified as a priority within the Corporate Plan (Our Vision) 2024-2028. On 20 December 2023, the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee agreed a set of overarching principles that will guide the review of the Local Plan with the aim of submitting an updated Local Plan to the Secretary of State before June 2025.

RESOURCES AND RISK

The overall review and update of the Local Plan will be managed by the Council’s Planning Policy Team utilising funds from the agreed Local Plan budget – as set out in the report to the Planning

Policy and Local Plan Committee on 20 December 2023. The initial exercise of identifying high-level spatial strategy options has been carried out by Officers in-house based on existing knowledge as supplemented by data in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which has also been carried out, and will be updated, in-house. The Sustainability Appraisal and Employment Land Studies referred to in this report are to be carried out by external consultants utilising the Local Plan budget.

In putting forward a series of high-level spatial strategy options for public consultation, the Council will be inviting feedback and opening itself up to public challenge. Some of the feedback is undoubtedly going to be negative, particularly from communities concerned about the indicative levels of development being suggested for their area. It is however an essential part of the process to invite comments from the public notwithstanding its potentially contentious nature; and to give proper consideration to a number of reasonable options before coming to a final decision on how much additional development is required and where it should be located.

Officers anticipate that residents will raise a variety of concerns including (but not limited to):

- questioning the need for any additional housing or employment land growth;
- suggestions that the district is already accommodating too much development;
- risk of a mismatch between the growth in housing and growth in jobs;
- potential for homes to attract in-comers to the district rather than meeting the needs of local families;
- the likely significant loss of greenfield agricultural land to development and its impact on future food production;
- possibility that numerous developments will erode the special character of the district and its unique appeal;
- impacts of development on the landscape, wildlife, the setting of historic buildings and the character of towns, villages and neighbourhoods;
- impacts of development on health, education and other community infrastructure;
- deficiencies in transport and utilities infrastructure with concerns about potential increases in traffic and surface water flooding;
- criticism of recent developments and their impacts; and
- accusations of singling out certain communities for development.

Through the consultation and approach to communications, the Council will need to do its best to provide a clear explanation to residents of its duties around planning, the requirements of national planning policy, the need for a Local Plan and the consequences of either failing to properly consider alternative options or otherwise not proceeding with the Local Plan review (i.e. that the Council could be left without an up-to-date Local Plan in 2026, leaving the district vulnerable to speculative, unplanned and unwanted development proposals and an uncertain period of 'planning by appeal').

Consultation on spatial strategy options also opens the Council up to representations from landowners, developers and planning agents who might argue either that the Council needs to plan for even greater levels of development than being suggested; or that there are alternative strategy

options or site proposals that also need to be considered for inclusion in the Local Plan. There might even be some suggestion that some sites already allocated in the Local Plan should be de-allocated in favour of alternative sites. The Council will need to consider and respond to such suggestions appropriately having regard to the guiding principles of the Local Plan review, emerging evidence and the comments from the public and other bodies.

Ultimately, following the consideration of a set of reasonable options, the Council will need to select a preferred spatial strategy option which is likely to be a refined variation on one or more of the options set out in this report. This will be a difficult, contentious but essential decision that will not please everyone in the district. At that point, through the preferred options and subsequent submission stage consultation exercises, the Council will be challenged and will receive objections from aggrieved residents, landowners, developers and other bodies. There is also a risk that, for good planning reasons – having regard to the comments of statutory and other technical consultees, the Council opts to select a spatial strategy option that is not necessarily the most popular (or least unpopular) amongst residents.

The preparation of a Local Plan is guided by legislation and regulations, which inform various stages of work and consultation that must be undertaken before the plan can be lawfully adopted. Third parties can apply for a Judicial Review if they feel the Council have acted unlawfully or have not followed the correct legal process. In order to mitigate the risk of Judicial Review, Officers in the Planning team will work closely with colleagues in Legal Services to ensure all relevant processes are adhered to throughout the programme of works, as well as following up-to-date advice from the Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service (PAS).

LEGAL

Planning legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework (last updated in December 2023) place Local Plans at the heart of the planning system, so it is essential that they are in place and kept up to date. Paragraph 11 in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Plans and decisions to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development which, for plan-making means:

- a) all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects;
- b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or

- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

Paragraph 9 of the NPPF requires Councils to have a clear understanding of the land available in their area through the preparation of a strategic housing land availability assessment. From this, planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. Planning policies should identify a supply of:

- a) specific, deliverable sites for five years following the intended date of adoption; and
- b) specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for the subsequent years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the remaining plan period.

Section 19 of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires a local planning authority to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal of each of the proposals in a Local Plan and the consequence of reasonable alternatives, during its preparation and in addition prepare a report of the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal. More generally, section 39 of the Act requires that the authority preparing a Local Plan must do so “with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development”. The purpose of a Sustainability Appraisal is to ensure that potential environmental effects are given full consideration alongside social and economic issues.

Paragraph 34 of the National Planning Policy Framework states: *“Local plans and spatial development strategies should be informed throughout their preparation by a sustainability appraisal that meets the relevant legal requirements. This should demonstrate how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains). Significant adverse impacts on these objectives should be avoided and, wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued. Where significant adverse impacts are unavoidable, suitable mitigation measures should be proposed (or, where this is not possible, compensatory measures should be considered).”*

The terms of reference of the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee includes the exercise of the Council’s functions, powers and duties in relation to the preparation of the District Council’s Local Plan, including ensuring that it meets the “tests of soundness” set out in the NPPF. This report does not require any recommendations to Full Council. When the Council does come to a final decision on the content of the updated Local Plan to be submitted to the Secretary of State in 2025, that decision will be one for Full Council.

One of the responsibilities of the Planning and Housing Portfolio Holder is to ensure effective two-way communication between the Executive and the Local Plan and Planning Committees, in particular in relation to the implementation of current Development Plan policies and to drafts of any review of the Development Plan. The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Planning has been consulted on the content of this report and is an attendee to the Committee.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Area or Ward affected: All wards.

Consultation/Public Engagement: The Local Plan Review will involve the same statutory stages of Consultation and Public Engagement as the original preparation of the Local Plan. It is recommended that a series of high-level spatial strategy options be published for public consultation as part of the Issues and Options stage and a preferred option is selected and refined accordingly for the subsequent Preferred Options consultation (regulation 18) and Publication Draft consultation (regulation 19). Once submitted, if the Local Plan Inspector considers that main modifications are required to make the Plan sound, a further consultation on these modifications would be required.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In December 2023, the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee agreed a number of guiding principles for the review of the Local Plan. One of those principles was: *“To accommodate and deliver any ‘residual’ housing requirement, the Council will consider and assess a range of reasonable options, will consult the public and other interest parties on those options and will undertake a ‘sustainability appraisal’ of those options before selecting a preferred approach to include in the updated Local Plan. The higher the housing requirement, the greater the challenge of identifying an appropriate strategy and more communities that are likely be affected.”*

Potential longer-term growth requirements

The Council’s current Local Plan makes provision, in the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2033, for a minimum 11,000 new homes and 12-20 hectares of employment land (as set out in Policies SP4 and SP5 of the Section 1 Plan adopted in January 2021). The housing requirement was based on an annualised ‘objectively assessed need’ (OAN) figure of 550 dwellings per annum (dpa) that was derived from detailed analysis of population and household projections taking a range of economic, affordability and other demographic factors into account (including the very specific ‘unattributable population change’ errors affecting Tendring’s figures). The figure of 550dpa was strongly challenged by a number of developers and landowners as part of the Local Plan examination and through a number of individual planning appeals, but it was ultimately agreed by the government-appointed Planning Inspector for the Section 1 Local Plan as being based on sound evidence.

Because the review of the Local Plan will extend its timeframe by eight years to 2041, it follows that the Council will need to update the Plan to provide for at least eight years’ worth of additional housing and employment land growth. However, the Council cannot simply roll-forward the 550dpa housing requirement from the current Local Plan to cover an extended eight-year period to 2041 and assume it to be sound. The Council will need to revisit the housing requirement applicable to the entirety of the period the updated Local Plan, as determined in accordance with the most up to date national planning policy. Similarly, the Council will need to revisit employment land requirements. Further

work will be carried out to determine the housing and employment land requirements for the updated Local Plan and these figures will need to be confirmed in time for the final submission version of the Plan. However, for the purposes of progressing the review of the Local Plan with a view to submission to the Secretary of State by June 2025, Officers have needed to make some high-level working assumptions that have fed into the exercise of identifying options.

For housing, if the Council was able to justify rolling forward the current annualised required of 550dpa, it would be looking to identify land for upwards of 10,000 homes in total over the period 2023 to 2041. If however, the Council is required to apply the 'standard method' for calculating local housing need, as set out in current national planning policy and latest projections (which are subject to regular change), it could mean increasing the annualised required from 550dpa to around 770dpa from 2026 which might suggest a requirement in the order of 13,000 homes. From these two approaches, it is reasonable to suggest (for the purpose of looking at high-level spatial strategy options) that the housing requirement for the period 2033-2041 could fall somewhere between 10,000 and 13,000 homes.

It is however important to take into account the fact that the current Local Plan already includes housing and mixed-use site allocations that are expected to deliver homes up to 2033 and, in the case of some of the larger proposals (like the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community and the Hartley Gardens, Rouses Farm and Oakwood Park developments on the edge of Clacton), delivery will continue beyond 2033 (and potentially up to and beyond 2041). There are also many developments already under construction or that have obtained planning permission for housing that will contribute to meeting any future housing requirements.

Based on the data contained within the Council's latest Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as reported to the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee in December 2023, the Council predicts that approximately 6,800 new homes will be built in the period April 2023 to March 2033. Further to that, the assumptions that sit behind the SHLAA trajectory indicate that larger developments will continue to deliver homes beyond 2033 and up to 2041, potentially totalling around 2,900 along with a further contribution from the Garden Community upwards of 1,000 homes. Taken together, the proposals in the current Local Plan along with sites under construction or with planning permission already provide for more than 10,000 new homes.

On a working assumption that the housing requirement for the period 2023 to 2041 could fall somewhere between 10,000 and 13,000 homes and current proposals already provide for upwards of 10,000, the residual requirement (i.e. the number of additional homes required to meet any shortfall) might reasonably fall within a range of 0 to 3,000. Allowing for a degree of flexibility (as is standard practice) to account for the possibility of certain sites not (for whatever reason) delivering at the rate anticipated, Officers suggest adding on an additional 1,000 homes to give a broad range of 1,000 to 4,000 homes that the review of the Local Plan might need to provide for. Clearly development at the upper end of that range will be more challenging to plan for than the lower end, for a variety of reasons.

For employment land, again further detailed work will be carried out in due course to help determine the potential demand over the extended period to 2041, but in any event the Council's current Local Plan already allocates around 32ha of employment land which is well in excess of the 12-20ha requirement for the period 2013-2033. If the upper end of that range (20ha) is simply annualised to 1ha per annum, it might be reasonable to suggest that a further 8 hectares of employment land could be needed to cover the extended period 2033 to 2041; albeit even under that scenario allocations in the current Local Plan already meet and exceed that requirement. What is not currently known without further analysis, is whether the demand for employment land will have increased post Covid-19 and taking into account changes in the national and local economy, renewed commercial interest following the designation of Freeport East, recognition of Tendring as an area for Levelling-Up and the signs of existing businesses looking to expand, relocate and become more energy efficient.

For the purpose of generating high-level spatial options for initial public consultation and testing, Officers are suggesting a working assumption that if any additional employment land is required, there would be a logic in looking at expanding upon the provision in one or potentially more strategically important locations along the A120 and A133 corridors – of which six have been identified.

Potential scales of development

As part of the 'call for sites' exercise carried out in early 2024, to invite suggestions for sites that could be assessed as options for inclusion in the Local Plan for either housing, employment, mixed-use development or other uses, Officers included a categorisation of potential housing/mixed-use developments from 'Small' through to 'Strategic/Mixed-Use – Long Term' as follows:

- Small – 1-29 homes
- Medium 30-99 homes
- Large 100-299 homes
- Strategic/Mixed-Use – Short-Term (5-10 years): 300-799 homes (likely to include school/community facilities)
- Strategic/Mixed-Use – Medium-Term (10-20years): 800-1,999 homes (likely to include school, community facilities and employment/commercial uses)
- Strategic/Mixed-Use – Long-Term (20+ years): 2000+ homes (likely to include schools, community facilities, employment/commercial uses and major transport infrastructure).

These categories were developed, not only to assist landowners, developers and others in thinking about potential scales of development and associated infrastructure requirements, but also to help work up some broad working assumptions to inform the process of generating high-level spatial strategy options i.e. by understanding the different scales of development that might be reasonable for consideration in different locations in the district.

As explained in more detail elsewhere in this report, the high-level options put forward by Officers for consideration include some that follow a traditional 'settlement-hierarchy' approach that directs

larger developments to larger settlements and, conversely, smaller developments to smaller settlements; along with other more radical alternative options involving strategic-scale development focussed on selected rural locations. The potential levels of housing and mixed-use development in different locations suggested as part of each option has been developed having regard to the above categories and thresholds.

Traditional hierarchy-based strategy options

As set out above, the Council's current Local Plan already provides for a significant proportion of what might be required in terms of housing and employment land to meet longer-term needs to 2041. The spatial strategy in the current Local Plan is underpinned by a 'settlement hierarchy' which is set out in Policy SPL1 which was been found to be sound by the government-appointed Planning Inspector as part of the Local Plan examination. Accordingly, one of the guiding principles agreed by the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee in December 2023 was as follows: *"The 'Settlement Hierarchy' forming part of the overall spatial strategy for the Local Plan (Policy SPL1) is likely to be carried forward, broadly unchanged, from the existing into the updated Plan, if possible. The current settlement hierarchy promotes a sustainable pattern of growth that sees:*

- *Clacton, Harwich/Dovercourt and the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community as the main focus for growth;*
- *the 'smaller urban settlements' of Frinton/Walton/Kirby Cross, Manningtree/Lawford/Mistley and Brightlingsea accommodating the second largest proportion of future growth;*
- *The 'rural service centres' of Alresford, Elmstead Market, Great Bentley, Little Clacton, St. Osyth, Thorpe le Soken and Weeley seeing modest increases in housing stock that is proportionate, achievable and sustainable; and*
- *other 'smaller rural settlements' across the district accommodating smaller-scale development that is sympathetic to their rural and often historic character.*

If, however, it becomes apparent that it is not possible to accommodate additional future growth to 2041 following this broad approach, the Council may need to consider alternative options that categorise some settlements differently."

With that final paragraph in mind, the suggested high-level spatial options include some (namely options 1 and 2) that broadly follow the traditional hierarchical approach already established in the current Local Plan and others (3, 4, 5 & 6) that represent more radical approaches that, if selected for inclusion in the updated Local Plan, would require changes to the settlement hierarchy.

The following commentary provides an overview of level of housing development that already has, or is expected to, take place in different locations following the Local Plan's current hierarchy-led approach; and how much additional development might, in theory, be achievable in each location over an extended period to 2041 if that approach is carried forward.

Strategic Urban Settlements and Garden Community

The current Local Plan strategy identifies Clacton on Sea, Harwich & Dovercourt and the proposed Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community as the locations for the largest proportion of the district's increase in housing stock up to 2033 on the basis that these locations have (or in the case of the Garden Community, will have) larger populations and a wide range of existing infrastructure and facilities, making them the most sustainable locations for growth. This approach also aligns with the Council's Economic Strategy which identifies Clacton, Harwich and the West of Tendring as growth locations.

Clacton has already grown by just over 1,000 homes in the last ten years and from the data in the 2023 Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), it is expected to grow again by around 1,700 homes between 2023 and 2033 with a further 2,700 post-2033 on large sites either allocated for development in the Local Plan or already under construction or with planning permission. Taking into account the potential for smaller developments to also come forward as 'windfalls', it is reasonable to suggest that up to 5,000 homes might be built in the Clacton area up to 2041 without having to make any changes to the Local Plan. These will include 950 homes at Rouses Farm (which has recently received outline planning permission), 1,700 homes at Hartley Gardens (where the Council is working with Homes England to develop a master plan) and 900 homes at Oakwood Park (extending beyond the current Finches Park development off Thorpe Road).

The Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community is expected to deliver around 7,500 homes in total at a rate of 200-250 a year from potentially as early as 2025/26. Under the current arrangements in the adopted Section 1 Local Plan, any new homes delivered at the Garden Community will count equally (50:50) towards Tendring and Colchester's respective housing requirements. If this arrangement continues beyond 2033 and to the completion of the Garden Community, half the total number of homes (circa 3,750) would therefore count towards meeting Tendring's housing requirement. For the period to 2033, the SHLAA trajectory predicts that around 1,900 homes will be delivered – of which 950 (50%) would count towards Tendring's requirement. Beyond 2033 and up to 2041 a rate of 250 homes a year would suggest a further 2,000 (1,000 for Tendring's 50% share) will be built – with development continuing beyond 2041. It would not therefore be unreasonable to suggest that the Garden Community is likely to contribute upwards of 2,000 homes toward any housing requirement for Tendring up to 2041.

Recognising the significant levels of development already expected to take place in Clacton and at the Garden Community, the Committee has already agreed the following guiding principle for the review of the Local Plan: *“Significant housing development is already planned on sites on the edge of Clacton on Sea (most notably, approximately 1,700 homes at Hartley Gardens) and land at the new Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community, both through allocations in the current adopted Local Plan and from developments with planning permission or under construction. These developments are already expected to make a significant contribution towards housing growth in Tendring for an extended Local Plan period up to 2041. The options for accommodating any homes*

to address additional requirements are therefore unlikely to involve any significant additional housing growth around Clacton or the proposed Garden Community.”

The situation for the Harwich & Dovercourt as a strategic urban area in the highest category of the settlement hierarchy is very different. Over the last ten years, approximately 600 new homes have been built in the area and a further 740 homes are expected to come forward on sites either allocated in the current Local Plan, already under construction or with planning permission (an expected total of more than 1,300 over 20 years). This level of growth, whilst not insubstantial, is significantly lower than that expected at Clacton and the Garden Community. Some of the reasons for a lower level of planned development in Harwich & Dovercourt in the Local Plan included a weakness in the housing market; and great uncertainty around future job creation and the likelihood of development happening at Bathside Bay and other employment sites. Unlike Clacton (where the retirement market has a strong influence on market demand) and the west of the district (where demand is driven, in part, by proximity to Colchester City), demand for housing in the Harwich area is more likely to be driven by job-creation. Furthermore, there is no doubt that land in and around Harwich & Dovercourt is affected by more physical and environmental constraints (including the North Sea, Stour Estuary, Hamford Water, areas at risk of flooding and sensitive landscapes) than either Clacton or the Tendring/Colchester Fringe.

With the designation of Freeport East, the commencement of development at Bathside Bay and Centurion Park at Horsley Cross further along the A120, the Levelling-Up project for Dovercourt Town Centre, good progress on the Languard View development off Low Road and work expected to commence this year at the Harwich Valley mixed-use development, there is growing confidence in likelihood of job creation in the Harwich area which, in turn, is likely to stimulate demand for housing in a way that was not anticipated at the time of preparing the current Local Plan.

Therefore, a number of the high-level spatial options suggested by Officers identify the Harwich & Dovercourt area as a location to accommodate a significant proportion of any residual housing requirement up to 2041 – potentially in the range of 800 to 2,000 homes, depending on the availability, suitability and deliverability of land – with an expectation that a large proportion of this would need to go on greenfield land. Development of this scale could potentially be achieved through a single Strategic/Mixed-Use – Medium-Term development of 800-1,999 homes (with reference to the categorisation set out above); or more likely through a combination of Small (1-29), Medium (30-99), Large (100-299) or Strategic/Mixed-Use – Short-Term (300-799) developments.

Smaller Urban Settlements

The Local Plan's current strategy identifies Frinton, Walton & Kirby Cross; Manningtree, Lawford & Mistley; and Brightlingsea as 'smaller urban settlements' accommodating the second largest proportion of the district's increase in housing stock. This is on the basis that they have large populations relative to rural settlements; they benefit from a range of existing infrastructure and facilities; and they provide a range of opportunities for the use of public transport, walking and cycling with established town centres, employment areas and infrastructure.

Frinton, Walton & Kirby Cross have already seen a number of housing developments take place in recent years, most notably the Hamford Park development on the former Martello Caravan Park site in Walton. In the last ten years, there have been more than 800 new homes built across the area in total and around 510 more homes are expected to be built between now and 2033 – including on the Samphire Meadow development in Elm Tree Avenue and the remaining phases of the Finches Park development off Halstead Road in Kirby Cross. Over the 20-year period 2013-2033, housing growth in Frinton/Walton/Kirby is expected to be comparable, at around 1,300 homes, to that of Harwich & Dovercourt – despite being in different tiers of the settlement hierarchy. The demand for housing in this area is known to be very strong, driven in part by its popularity for retirement. There are however a number of considerable and obvious physical and environmental constraints to further significant growth, including a very limited supply of brownfield sites and the position of the North Sea, Backwaters and wider Hamford Water and the protected strategic green gap to Kirby le Soken.

The Manningtree, Lawford & Mistley area has accommodated a significant proportion of the district's overall housing growth in recent years with notable developments at Summers Park, Lawford Green and River Reach. More than 600 homes in total have been built in the last ten years and a further 870 further homes are still expected to be built in the area on sites either already under construction or with planning permission. Growth at Manningtree/Lawford/Mistey will have achieved circa 1,500 homes over 20 years – which is more growth than expected at both Harwich & Dovercourt and Frinton/Walton/Kirby. Close proximity to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, proximity to Colchester and Ipswich and a frequent mainline rail service to London makes the area a particularly popular place to live and market demand for housing has been very strong. The scope for any additional development over and above current schemes however is limited by physical and environmental constraints including the Stour Estuary, Dedham Vale and the strategic green gap around Mistley Place Park.

In comparison to Frinton/Walton/Kirby and Manningtree/Lawford/Mistley, growth at Brightlingsea in recent years has been relatively contained due to the town's physical and environmental constraints with the waterside developments and recently completed Colne Gardens scheme off Robinson Road being the last of the town's notable schemes. Development over the last ten years has delivered over 300 new homes but there are no significant additional housing developments in the pipeline for between now and 2033. With one road in and one road out, no rail service, limited bus services, the Colne Estuary and associated creeks and sensitive coastal slopes, the scope for further expansion is always likely to be lower at Brightlingsea than for other areas in the smaller urban settlement category of the Local Plan's settlement hierarchy.

The extent to which any of these smaller urban settlements are able to accommodate additional housing growth up to 2041 will largely depend on the availability, suitability and deliverability of land. However, if there is to be any additional housing development directed to these areas as part of the Local Plan review following a traditional settlement hierarchy approach, Officers' working assumption is a level somewhere between 300 and 800 additional homes for Frinton/Walton/Kirby and Manningtree/Lawford/Mistley; and between 100 and 300 for Brightlingsea. These assumptions take into account both recent and current levels of development in those locations and the comparatively higher level of development that the Council might expect to consider in Harwich & Dovercourt as a

higher-tier strategic urban settlement. Development of these scales could potentially be achieved through a combination of Small (1-29), Medium (30-99), Large (100-299) and Strategic/Mixed-Use – Short-Term (300-799) developments; but there are serious questions over whether the upper-end of the 300-800 range will be physically achievable given land constraints.

Rural Service Centres

The rural service centres in Tendring's Local Plan are the larger villages of Alresford, Elmstead Market, Great Bentley, Little Clacton, St. Osyth, Thorpe le Soken and Weeley. Of these villages, Alresford, Great Bentley, Thorpe and Weeley are notable in having railway stations on the branch line between Colchester, Clacton and Walton. In following a hierarchical approach, the strategy in the current Local Plan had envisaged modest levels of development of a scale proportionate, achievable and sustainable for each settlement. In reality and partly as a result of developments granted planning permission on appeal, some of these villages have seen more significant growth – almost doubling in size.

Of these settlements it is Great Bentley and Elmstead Market that have received and are expected to receive the highest levels of development. Great Bentley has expanded by around 200 homes already in the last ten years with a further 300 under construction or in the pipeline. Elmstead Market has similarly seen more than 150 new homes built in the last decade with nearly 300 more expected, including on the Chattowood development and recently approved Marketfield Grows scheme east of the main settlement. Come 2033, these settlements would have each grown by around 500 homes over 20 years.

Thorpe le Soken has grown by around 200 homes in the last ten years with the Henderson Park, Lady Nelson Gardens and other developments off Frinton Road being notable examples. A further 60 homes are expected to be completed over the next two to three years, but there are no other significant developments in the pipeline beyond that. Little Clacton and St. Osyth do not have railway stations and are notable in their proximity to Clacton – where significant expansion in housing is already planned. They have however each accommodated a fair amount of housing development in their own right over the last ten years, with further development still to come. By 2033, Little Clacton and St. Osyth are each expected to have grown by more than 300 homes – with most of St. Osyth's growth resulting from enabling development to fund the restoration of the Priory.

Alresford has already seen most of its growth happen, with around 300 homes over the last ten years – notably off Cockaynes Lane and St. Andrew's Close. There are no further significant developments currently in the pipeline either in the Local Plan or Alresford Parish Council's new Neighbourhood Plan. In contrast, most of Weeley village's planned growth is still to come, with around 300 homes expected on land south of Thorpe Road, from the Barleyfields development off Thorpe Road (which also includes land for a new primary school) and on the site of the Council's former offices – but there have been notable developments in neighbouring Weeley Heath.

Looking at the scales of development that are already expected to have taken place across the district's rural service centres in the 20-year period 2013-2033, growth will have tended to range

from 300 to 500 homes per village. This is comparable to growth at the smaller urban settlement of Brightlingsea and a scale of development much greater than had been envisaged at the time of preparing the Local Plan. However it still follows, generally speaking, that the level of development in rural service centres by 2033 will have been lower than that for smaller urban settlements but higher than that for smaller rural settlements – in line with the broad concept of a settlement hierarchy approach. If the hierarchical approach were carried forward into the review of the Local Plan to guide further development to 2041, as a working assumption it would not be wholly unreasonable to suggest that the rural service centres might be able to accommodate up to 300 additional homes per village over and above existing developments – depending of course on the detailed consideration of land availability, suitability and deliverability as well as infrastructure provision

However, for Elmstead Market with no railway station, significant development still to come, the Tendring Colchester Border on its doorstep (within the same Parish) and with a new Neighbourhood Plan in the process of being examined and adopted – Officers are suggesting that there should be no additional planned growth for the village as part of the Local Plan review unless it comes through a review of the Parish Council's own Neighbourhood Plan. Officers are also suggesting that similar recognition is given to Little Clacton and St. Osyth where there are no railway stations and where there is close proximity to the substantial growth already planned for Clacton, some of which (at Oakwood Park), actually extends into the Parish of Little Clacton.

Accordingly, for the purposes of the high-level spatial strategy options, Officers are suggesting that consideration is given to options for up to 300 additional homes for Alresford, Great Bentley, Weeley and Thorpe over and above existing developments for the period to 2041; a lower level of up to 100 additional homes for Little Clacton and St. Osyth; and an exemption for Elmstead Market with no additional planned growth (for the reasons above). These levels of development would be broadly consistent with the current settlement hierarchy approach, but would need to be tested through an assessment of land availability, suitability and deliverability. They could be achieved through a combination of Small (1-29), Medium (30-99), Large (100-299) developments.

These assumptions above are reflected in high-level spatial strategy options 2 and 5. Options 3 and 5 however suggest even greater levels of development for Alresford, Great Bentley, Weeley and Thorpe as part of more radical non-hierarchy based scenarios, which are explained in more detail later in this report.

Smaller rural settlements

The 'smaller rural settlements' category in Policy SPL1 of the current Local Plan lists 18 settlements across Tendring's rural heartland that have much less in the way of job opportunities, local services, facilities and other infrastructure where residents might be more reliant on neighbouring towns and villages for work, shopping and other services. Because of this, and the likelihood that people may need to travel greater distances either by public transport (if available) or private car, these smaller villages are considered to be the least sustainable locations for growth where only small-scale development is envisaged.

The villages in this category vary quite considerably in their size between places like Ardleigh and Bradfield and Great Oakley with several hundred homes, down to places like Beaumont Cum-Moze, Little Bentley and Little Bromley that comprise just a few dozen homes. Over the last ten years, some of these villages have grown more than others; and while most individual developments have been of a smaller scale, as envisaged by the Local Plan, there have been some larger developments. These have either been granted by the Council within settlement development boundaries or as departures from the Plan or rural exception schemes for affordable housing; or otherwise granted by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal. For most of the smaller rural settlements, growth over the last ten years has totalled no more than 100 homes for any one village, with a general tendency for the larger of the villages to see the larger developments and the smaller villages, like Beaumont, Little Bromley and Little Bentley seeing only a handful of additional homes at most.

Because smaller rural settlements offer less sustainable locations for growth than other settlements in the district, Officers have assumed, for the purposes of the high-level spatial strategy options, that either no additional development is planned for the extended period to 2041 (as per option 1) - limiting development to infill within settlement development boundaries or self/custom-build, rural exception schemes or community-led developments on the edge of villages, considered on their merits; or (as per option 2) a proportion of planned housing is distributed amongst the villages, with no more than 100 homes being appropriate for a single village and (which could be made up of one 'Medium' 30-99 homes or a number of 'Small' 1-29 home developments). For the much smaller villages, no more than 30 homes, made up of one or more Small (1-29 home) developments. In reality, even 30 homes could be too many for some of the district's villages – particularly those with only a few dozen existing homes, but it provides a starting point and some reasonable parameters for the purpose of testing options and the availability, suitability and deliverability of land.

It is suggested that Ardleigh village, for similar reasons to Elmstead Market, be exempted from any proposals for additional growth in the updated Local Plan given the proximity within its parish of the Garden Community and a Neighbourhood Plan in the final stages of the process. Any additional housing growth for Ardleigh could best be considered through the review of the Ardleigh Neighbourhood Plan.

In considering whether there should be a distribution of smaller-scale developments across rural areas, Officers are mindful of the requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for at least 10% of new homes to be on smaller sites of less than one hectare – which for the period 2023 to 2041 could be somewhere between 1,000 and 1,400 homes across dozens of sites – mostly in the Small (1-29) development category. With an ever diminishing supply of small previously-developed sites in the district's built-up urban areas and a likelihood that it will be larger sites on the edge of urban settlements and larger villages that deliver the majority of new homes, it could be that small adjustments to the settlement development boundaries in and around some of the smaller rural settlements provide one of the best opportunities to deliver a range of smaller developments in line with NPPF expectations.

Alternative strategy options

The settlement hierarchy approach to the spatial strategy for growth outlined above directs more growth to urban locations with proportionately lower level of growth going to rural locations. Alternative approaches might need to be considered however if it becomes apparent that the level of additional housing required to 2041 is too high to be accommodated in the traditional manner; but would require developments of a larger scale in the rural parts of the district that would facilitate the delivery of brand-new schools, health and community facilities along with investment in other infrastructure.

Metro Town

These more radical alternative approaches include the 'Metro Town' concept (option 3) that moves away from the hierarchy approach to prioritise development within a reasonable walking distance (800 metres) of the branch-line railway stations at Alresford, Great Bentley, Weeley, Thorpe le Soken and Kirby Cross. This option envisages developments up to 800 homes in total in each of the five locations with a large proportion (if not all) of the development being delivered by 2041. This level of development could be delivered through one or more Strategic Mixed-Use – Short Term developments (300-799 homes) or through a combination of Small (1-29), Medium (30-99), Large (100-299) schemes.

The Metro Town concept is based, broadly, on the proposal put forward by the 'Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex' (CAUSE) as an alternative to the (then) three Garden Communities proposed for North Essex along the A120 corridor. The concept was considered as part of the Section 1 Local Plan examination and was tested along with other options, on the Planning Inspector's advice, as part of an additional Sustainability Appraisal carried out in 2019.

The CAUSE Metro Town option tested in 2019 looked at different scales of development (700, 2,000 and 2,500 homes) at each of the four villages of Alresford, Great Bentley, Weeley and Thorpe. The variation of the Metro Plan concept put forward by Officers in option 3 includes a fifth location, Kirby Cross, on the basis that it has a station on the same branch-line with some undeveloped greenfield land within its proximity. However, the maximum amount of development being suggested in any of these five locations in option 3 is 800 homes – i.e. at the lower end of what was put forward in 2019 and more reflective of what might be realistic both given the amount of land potentially available within 800m of each station and the amount of development that has already happened, or is already planned, in each of the areas concerned. It also aligns, broadly with the scale of development that generally requires the creation of a 1 form-entry primary school and which could be delivered within a 5-10 year timescale.

Garden Villages

Another alternative to the traditional hierarchy-based approach to development could include the establishment of one or more new settlements, or 'Garden Villages' of a smaller scale to the proposed Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community, but where similar Garden Community

principles would apply. Such a development would be in the region of 2,000 to 5,000 homes in total in the 'Strategic/Mixed-Use – Long-Term' category of development with a timescale for delivery of potentially 20 or more years; and the need to deliver both primary and secondary schools, community facilities, employment/commercial uses and major transport infrastructure. Therefore, it would be likely that a new Garden Village would deliver some homes (potentially no more than 2,000) in the period to 2041, but development would continue beyond 2041 and would contribute towards housing growth in the longer-term.

As part of the Section 1 Local Plan examination and associated 2019 Sustainability Appraisal, alternative options for development of this kind and scale were considered on the Colchester Fringe in the Plains Farm/Fox Street area of Ardleigh (of potentially 2,000 homes); a 'Tendring Central' Garden Village in the Frating/Great Bromley area (at scales of 2,000, 2,500 and 4,500 homes); a Garden Village at Weeley (2,000 homes); and (through the CAUSE Metro Town proposals), 2,000-2,500 home developments at Alresford, Great Bentley, Weeley and Thorpe. These concepts were all based on proposals that had been put forward by third parties for consideration as part of the Local Plan process (and who may wish to promote those proposals again), but that were ultimately rejected last time round in favour of the strategy set out in the current Local Plan – i.e. a hierarchy-based approach with a Garden Community on the Tendring/Colchester border.

For the purpose of looking at alternative options as part of the current Local Plan review, Officers are suggesting (through option 4) that similar proposals are tested for Colchester Fringe/Fox Street, Frating/Great Bromley, Weeley and Thorpe le Soken on the basis of their strategically important locations, but with the addition of Horsley Cross – following the start of work at Centurion Park and the designation of Freeport East. Each of these locations has significant physical, environmental and practical challenges – but for completeness and to ensure the Council has properly considered a reasonable range of alternatives, it is suggested that all are put forward for public consultation and testing through Sustainability Appraisal.

Hybrid Option

The hybrid option (option 5) is put forward as a combination of approaches taken from options 1 to 4 that seeks to direct development towards existing settlements broadly in line with a hierarchy-based approach, with a large proportion of development focussed on Harwich & Dovercourt (up to 800 homes); but with up to 300 homes for both the smaller urban settlements of Frinton/Walton/Kirby Cross and Manningtree/Lawford Mistley as well as the 'Metro-Town' locations from Option 3 Alresford, Great Bentley, Weeley. Instead of there being residential development distributed amongst the small rural settlements (as per option 2), a single Garden Village would be established in the centre of the district either the Frating/Great Bromley, Horsley Cross or Weeley areas.

A120 Freeport/Tendring Central Growth and Windfall option

Option 6 prioritises Harwich & Dovercourt and the establishment of a new Garden Village in the Frating/Great Bromley area as locations for growth as part of a strategy that specifically promotes improvements to, or the upgrading of, the A120; but that also allows for a range of small-scale

residential developments through adjustments to the settlement development boundaries across other towns and villages in the district. This approach therefore provides a wide range of small-site opportunities for small to medium sized housebuilders and local construction companies whilst still having strategic focus on major growth along the A120 corridor.

Employment Land Options

One of the guiding principles for the Local Plan review agreed by the Committee in December 2023 was: *“The Council will specifically review the supply of land for new business and industrial development in the Local Plan, informed by updated technical evidence. In particular, the Council will consider the need to allocate additional land in and around Harwich and the A120/A133 corridor to maximise the potential for new business investment following the designation of ‘Freeport East’ and the start of the Bathside Bay Container Port expansion development; and to enable existing businesses in the district to relocate, expand and diversify and to free up property on existing employment sites for the establishment of new and/or growing local businesses.”*

Six broad locations have been identified within each of the six high-level spatial strategy options for potential strategic employment land allocations along the A120 and A133 corridors that, subject to further analysis could either, individually or in combination, widen the choice of land available for business and industrial activity in the district over and above the 32 hectares of land already identified in the Local Plan. These locations are summarised as follows:

- Land north of the proposed Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community and north of the A120 that would have to follow the completion of the A120/A133 link road and associated grade-separated dumbbell junction proposed for that location;
- Land off the new roundabout on the A120 at Little Bromley where there have been recent grants of permissions for business-related development;
- Land at Frating adjoining the existing cluster of business activity at Manheim Car Auctions and Penguin Random House with good access to the A133/A120 interchange – noting that a planning application has been submitted for land south of Colchester Road (opposite the existing business area) for the relocation of Dalau from Clacton on Sea;
- Land at Horsley Cross, expanding upon the current development of Centurion Park and which might centre on the land north-west of the A120/B1035 roundabout which has already been identified as a potential ‘customs site’ in support of growth around Freeport East;
- Land at Weeley in the proximity of Tendring Park Services and the A133/B1033 roundabout – a key location in the centre of the district at the gateway to Clacton and the Frinton/Walton area; and

- Land in the Dovercourt and Parkeston area with access to the A120 which could be an expansion of the current proposed Harwich Valley development or elsewhere where there is good access to the A120, the port and the development proposed for Bathside Bay.

The scale of employment development that might be possible in each location will vary considerably depending on physical and environmental constraints and transport capacity; but some locations could have the potential for business parks of a strategic scale in excess of 10 hectares.

It is Officers' intention to commission specialist consultants to update, as necessary, the Council's evidence underpinning its Economic Strategy to help determine whether there is likely to be a demand for additional employment land over and above current Local Plan requirements and allocations; along with a site-specific assessment, in line with government guidelines, of land in the six suggested locations.

An Employment Land Review (ELR) undertaken for Tendring in 2019 included an assessment of sites in the district already in existence and operational, sites allocated in the Local Plan, sites with and without planning permission and other alternatives. The ELR notably included an assessment of sites in the following locations which correspond with some of those identified above:

- 2.8 hectares of land north of Colchester Road, Weeley;
- 23 hectares of land south of Manheim Auctions, Frating;
- 1.3 hectares of land on the A120, Little Bentley; and
- 2.2 hectares of land off the A120 west of Little Bentley.

Consideration was also given, within the assessment, to the employment potential of land at the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community; land south of Colchester Road, Weeley; or as part of a 'Tendring Central' Garden Village concept at Frating. For a number of these sites, the 2019 ELR identified strong potential for employment development – albeit more likely in the longer-term, potentially beyond the timescales of the current Local Plan. Thus there is a precedent for considering the merits of employment development in the six locations identified as potential options; and a logic in revisiting these as part of a new and updated Employment Land Review.

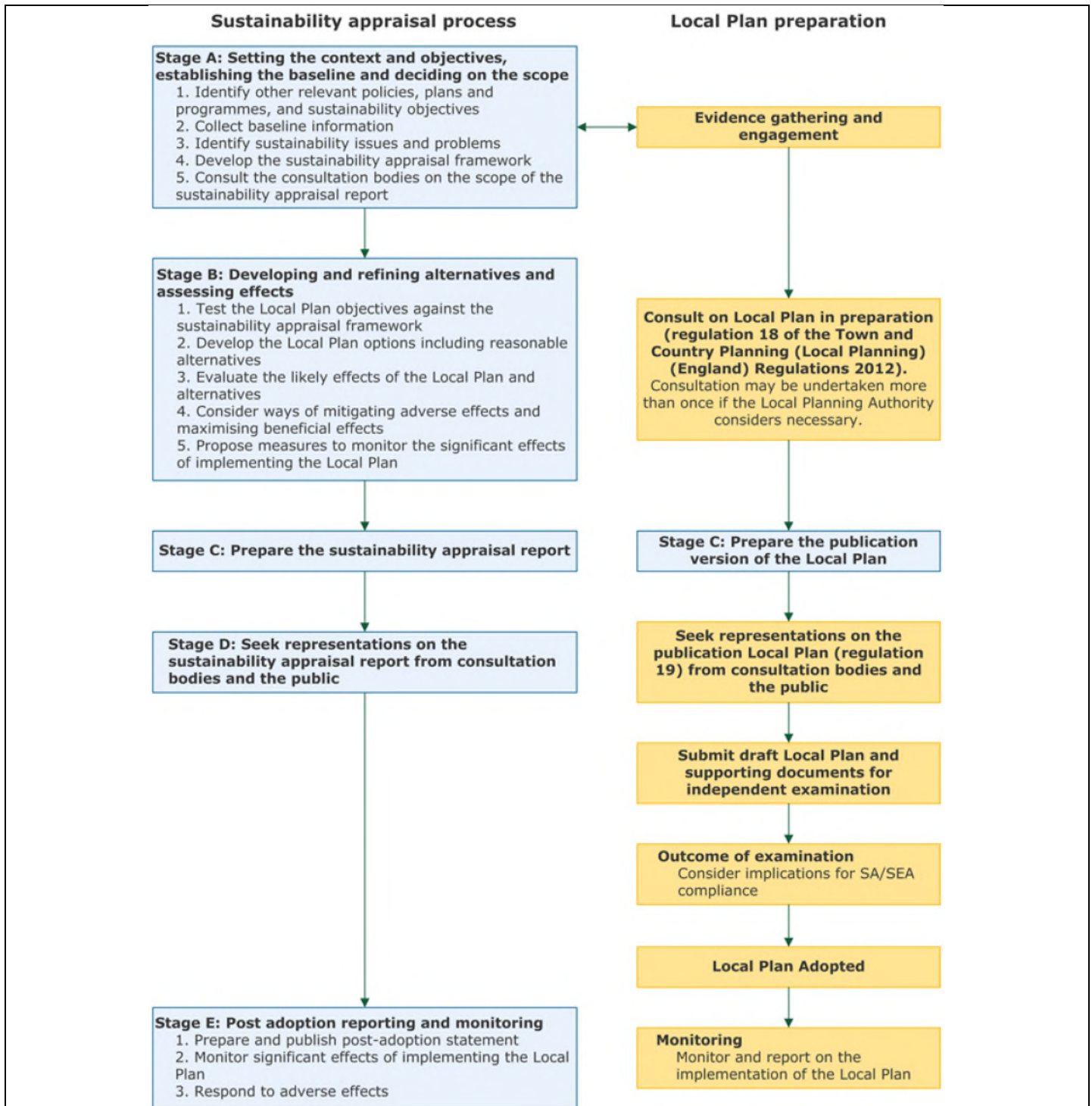
Some of the locations under consideration relate better to existing or proposed centres of population than others and if it is ultimately decided to establish one or more additional strategic employment sites in locations remote from existing or proposed population centres and a potential workforce, serious consideration would need to be given to both transport implications and the need to secure investment in public transport connectivity.

Sustainability Appraisal

The high level options set out in this report will need to be assessed as part of the Local Plan's Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The purpose of the SA is to assess the plan's policies, allocations and reasonable alternatives, and to explain why the preferred strategy, allocations and policies were selected.

The SA will appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of the Local Plan from the outset, and will help ensure that the decisions the Council makes about what policies and allocations are included in the plan contribute to achieving sustainable development. The SA is not a one-off exercise, but is one that is integrated into the various stage of preparing a Local Plan – providing evidence, helping to test the evidence, and helping with developing options.

The process of undertaking an SA is set out in National Planning Practice Guidance, and follows five sequential stages illustrated in the following flow chart.



Source: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

Establishing the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal is the first step. This Scoping Report explains the context; identifies sustainability objectives and the proposed approach of the assessment; and identifies relevant environmental, economic and social issues. The scoping exercise also includes an analysis of the context in which the Plan is being prepared –including Council policies, plans, programmes, strategies and other initiatives which may have an influence on the content of the Local Plan. Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency are all consulted on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal at this stage.

It is also necessary to identify data about the existing environmental, economic and social characteristics of the area that will be affected by the Local Plan, in order to fully understand the impacts that the policies and allocations are likely to have. The scoping report will need to address topics such as:

- Air quality;
- Biodiversity and green infrastructure;
- Climate change adaptation and flood risk;
- Climate change mitigation and energy;
- Community and wellbeing (including equalities and health);
- Economy and employment;
- Historic environment;
- Housing;
- Land (including agricultural land, brownfield land and contaminated land);
- Landscape;
- Rural areas;
- Transport;
- Waste; and
- Water.

The SA for Section 2 of the current Local Plan assessed the policies, proposals and alternatives against a series of core sustainability objectives, established in the scoping report, which were:

1. To provide decent and affordable homes for all;
2. To ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land;
3. Harness the District's economic strengths;
4. Minimise transport growth whilst capturing the economic benefits of international gateways;
5. To build stronger more resilient sustainable communities with better education and social outcomes;
6. Protect and enhance natural, historic and environmental assets;
7. Reduce contributions to climate change; and
8. To conserve and enhance natural resources and reduce climate change impacts.

These were established by analysing the unique set of issues faced by Tendring District, establishing the state of the environment in the absence of any Local Plan policies (the baseline), and then formulating an objective for the Local Plan to address. Assessing early proposals against these objectives enabled the Council to select the most suitable options to carry forward into the draft Local Plan for consultation, and then to the final version that was submitted for examination.

The Sustainability Appraisal for Section 2 of our Local Plan was prepared by Essex County Council Place Services. The previous SA successfully supported the Local Plan through examination in 2021, and it is therefore the intention to utilise as much of the existing methodology as possible. This should deliver the best value for money for the Council, and because much of the work will be

able to be updated rather than undertaken from scratch. Officers have begun meeting with colleagues at Place Services to discuss this process.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – High-level Spatial Strategy Options

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Section 1 Sustainability Appraisal

- [Section One Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment – Non-Technical Summary](#)
- [Section One Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report](#)
- [Section One Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report Annex A \(Plans & Programmes\)](#)
- [Section One Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report Annex B \(Baseline Information\)](#)
- [Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report Annex C \(Alternatives and Consultation Comments\)](#)

Section 1 Additional Sustainability Appraisal

- [Additional Sustainability Appraisal of North Essex Local Plan S1 - Summary of Draft Findings](#)
- [Additional Sustainability Appraisal of North Essex Section 1 Local Plan: Executive Summary](#)
- [Additional Sustainability Appraisal of North Essex Section 1 Local Plan: Non-Technical Summary](#)
- [Additional Sustainability Appraisal of North Essex Local Plan Section 1: Main Report](#)

Section 2 Sustainability Appraisal

- [Section 2 Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment – Non-Technical Summary](#)
- [Section 2 Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment – Environmental Report](#)
- [Sustainability Appraisal Addendum: Appraisal of New Policy HP4](#)

Other documents

- [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\) NOVEMBER 2023](#)
- [Tending Economic Strategy 2020-24](#)
- [Tending Employment Land Review \(ELR\) September 2019](#)