

REQUEST FOR QUOTATION

TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL

SPECIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS: STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT LAND STUDY FOR TENDRING

APRIL 2024

INTRODUCTION

Tendring District Council is looking to commission specialist consultants to carry out a review of strategic employment land provision in the Tendring District to inform the mandatory five-year review of the Council's Local Plan.

This Strategic Employment Land Review will consider and help determine, specifically, the need to allocate any additional land (over and above existing allocations in the current adopted Local Plan) for primarily business and industrial purposes in strategic locations in Tendring with a likely focus on the A12, A120 and A133 transport corridors. This might or might not arise following consideration of:

- the intended roll-forward of the Local Plan time-frame over an extended period from the current end-date of 2033 to 2041;
- the additional housing development likely to be planned for over the extended period to meet projected needs and its impact on economic growth and the demand for jobs;
- increasing evidence of businesses looking to relocate from their existing premises to enable them to expand, diversify and become more energy efficient and the possibility that this might free up existing premises for market churn and smaller start-ups;
- the designation of, and opportunities associated with Freeport East (which came about after the current Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State and while still in the latter stages of the examination process);
- the implementation of the planning permission for container port expansion at Bathside Bay following Freeport designation and its potential, in the interim, to support the green energy industry;
- the identification of Tendring as one of the government's Levelling Up Partnership areas with funding for Town Centre regeneration schemes in Clacton and Dovercourt; and

- the progress of the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community and associated infrastructure through the planning process and the emerging understanding of the potential for economic growth emerging through more detailed planning and economic work.

The study will primarily form part of the Council's evidence base to inform the Local Plan review but will also assist in the development of strategies for attracting inward investment and funding for employment and infrastructure across North Essex and the Freeport East area as well as transport strategies.

STUDY AREA

The study area for this commission is principally the administrative District of Tendring. The consultant will however need to consider the wider strategic context and implications of strategic employment land allocations on the economic strategies across North Essex and the Freeport East area to understand and determine the potential level of demand for accommodation and land and for what sectors.

BACKGROUND

Planning Law and National Planning Policy

The Council is proposing to undertake a mandatory five-year review of its adopted Local Plan – as required under Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

As advised in paragraph 22 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (September 2023), a Local Plan's 'strategic policies' should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities.

Paragraph 31 of the NPPF says that the preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence that is adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned; taking into account relevant market signals.

Paragraph 33 of the NPPF says that the review of the Local Plan should take into account changing circumstances affecting the area, or any relevant changes in national policy.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) contains guidance on assessing economic need and the type of employment land that is needed as well as guidance on planning for logistics and specialist/new sectors.

Current Planning Policy Position

The current Local Plan for Tendring was adopted in two parts in January 2021 and January 2022 respectively. Section 1 of the Local Plan was prepared in partnership with, and is common to, the three North Essex Councils of Tendring, Colchester and Braintree but was adopted by the three Councils separately. Importantly, the Section 1 Local Plan (adopted by Tendring in January 2021) contains the 'strategic' Policy SP5 'Employment' which sets out the amount of employment land, in hectares, required for office, research & development, industrial, storage and distribution uses for the plan period 2013-2033 for the North Essex area and for each of the three constituent authorities.

The supply of employment land is addressed by the Councils in part through the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community proposal which is subject of its own Development Plan Document (DPD) in the process of being examined; and through the policies and proposals in the individual 'Section 2' Local Plans prepared separately for each of the three Councils. Tendring's Section 2 Local Plan was adopted in January 2022.

The employment land requirement for Tendring for the period 2013-2033 as set out in the current adopted Local Plan is set between a range of 12 and 20 hectares. In line with Policy SP8 in the Section 1 Local Plan, the emerging Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community DPD seeks to allocate at least 25 hectares of employment land of which 7 hectares are expected to be delivered before 2033. The DPD identifies land close to the University of Essex and Knowledge Gateway to deliver future growth in knowledge-based sectors and land close to the A120 to cater for more general business and industrial development.

Outside of the Garden Community, Policy PP7 in Section 2 of the Tendring Local Plan identifies approximately 32 hectares of new employment land across six sites in Tendring – which itself is in excess of the 12-20ha requirement set out in Policy SP5 of the Section 1 Local Plan. All of these sites however do benefit from planning permission and some have either already been built or are under construction.

Policy PP7 states that on these sites, proposals for development in use classes B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) will be supported. Proposals for employment uses falling outside of use classes B2 or B8 (such as retail, offices, other town centre uses or other 'sui generis' uses) will be considered against other relevant policies within the Local Plan.

It goes on to state that applications for alternative non-employment uses will only be considered if it can be demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use. Such applications will be treated having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities. It also allows for employment-related development beyond these allocated sites, stating that proposals will be considered having regard to their potential to support economic growth in the district and the requirements of other policies in the Local Plan.

There are also numerous existing employment sites across the district that are identified in the Local Plan and protected through Policy PP6. That policy states that the Council will seek to protect existing employment sites, as shown on the relevant Policies Maps and Local Maps. Sites within use classes B2 and B8 will be safeguarded for these purposes. Employment sites falling within Use Class E(g) (Offices, R&D, Light Industry) will be retained and will continue to provide for the employment needs of the district.

Policy PP6 also states that Proposals for employment uses falling outside of use classes B2, B8 or other established activities (such as retail, offices, other town centre uses or other 'sui generis' uses) on protected employment sites will be considered on their merits and against other relevant policies within the Local Plan. The policy then goes on to set out the conditions under which non-employment development on protected employment sites might be permitted.

Tendring Economic Strategy 2020-2024

The Council's Economic Strategy and associated socio-economic baseline data, carried out by consultants Hatch Regeneris, serves both as the Council's overarching strategy for working with partners to achieve economic growth and job creation; and evidence underpinning the approach to growth in the Local Plan.

The strategy establishes five objectives. The first two of which are designed to focus on local strength, supporting the aspiration to redefine and diversify Tendring's economy – focusing on the creation of stronger identities and specialisms as the basis for future economic growth:

Objective 1: Targeting growth locations – i.e. intervening in locations where the potential for growth is highest and there is a strong case for intervention – namely Clacton on Sea, Jaywick Sands, Harwich & Dovercourt and the Tendring/Colchester border.

Objective 2: Targeting growth sectors – i.e. focusing activity on the sectors that are most important not only to Tendring, but also to Essex and the UK economy.

The other three objectives are designed to ensure a more general improvement in Tendring's economy and that economic growth is as impactful and inclusive as possible:

Objective 3: Ensure residents have the skills and information to participate – i.e. working with education providers, training organisations and businesses to ensure that residents have the means to access opportunities in Tendring and beyond.

Objective 4: Support growth and innovation in Tendring's businesses – i.e. targeting specific growth sectors, working with existing businesses to support their growth and innovation, particularly where they have growth potential.

Objective 5: Delivering housing to support economic objectives – i.e. supporting an increase in population and housing (alongside appropriate infrastructure), to support a stronger labour market and increased local spending.

These objectives are reflected in the current Local Plan, most notably in the identification of Clacton on Sea, Harwich & Dovercourt and the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community as 'strategic urban settlements' and the principal focus of housing and employment development; and through the identification of Jaywick Sands as a Priority Area for Economic Regeneration.

Freeport East/Bathside Bay

Following the UK's departure from the European Union, the Government announced the creation of 'Freeports' with the aim of creating jobs, increasing international trade, contributing towards the regional levelling up agenda and serving as hubs for innovation.

Freeport East, centred around the ports of Harwich and Felixstowe, the A120/A14 corridors and Gateway 14 near Stowmarket was confirmed in 2021 following a successful expression of interest from key partners including the relevant local authorities, County Councils and the port operators Hutchinson Ports UK (HPUK). A full business case followed in 2022 detailing the ambition to deliver trade, a green energy hub, innovation and levelling up.

Harwich in particular is identified for its potential to become the southern North Sea's leading Green Energy Hub, providing competitive services to the offshore wind markets on the east and southeast coasts of the UK (with easy access to the North Sea, offering the ability to service the whole UK and Northern European markets), winning business from competitors in Europe, deepening offshore wind expertise in the UK, supporting the drive to achieve 60 percent UK content, and providing one of the main foundation points for the national industry.

Bathside Bay in Harwich received planning permission for full reclamation and creation of a container port in 2005 which was essentially renewed again in 2013 to cover an extended period. At the time of preparing the current Local Plan, it was questionable (due to the passage of time and impact of the 2008 economic downturn) if the planning permission would be implemented and if the container port development would ever take place. The policies and proposals in the Local Plan therefore reflected a cautious scenario where it was assumed that the development would not happen. The allocation of land for employment and housing in the Local Plan were made with no expectation around delivery at Bathside Bay and effect its development could have on the economy and the housing market – particularly in the Harwich area.

With the announcement of Freeport East in 2021, the Local Plan had already reached the latter stages of the examination process and it was too late by then to consider any amendments to the Local Plan at that stage to reflect a more optimistic outlook.

Subsequently, HPUK submitted applications to both vary certain planning conditions and legal obligations on the Bathside Bay planning permission to enable a phased approach to delivery that would allow the container port development to be physically implemented (thus keeping the permission live in perpetuity) and for interim uses to support the Green Hub ambition of Freeport East to be considered. Permissions to vary the relevant conditions and obligations were granted by the Council and a physical start was confirmed on site in 2022.

A planning application for a temporary use of part of the reclaimed bay to serve the construction, assembly and maintenance of off-shore wind farms was submitted in November 2023.

Freeport status provides the opportunity to enjoy tax and customs benefits as well as access to government funding and retention of business rates which are expected to act as an incentive for inward investment and potentially provide the means by which some of the construction and infrastructure costs around Bathside Bay could be supported.

In recent months, the Council has seen a notable increase in formal and informal approaches from businesses and landowners along the A120 corridor with renewed enthusiasm and interest in bringing business, industrial and logistics development to the area.

Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community

The proposal for a new Garden Community between Colchester and Elmstead Market of around 7,500 homes with 25ha of employment land is the subject of an emerging Development Plan Document (DPD) due for examination by the Planning Inspectorate in early 2024. The development is being actively promoted by master-developers Latimer (part of the Clarion Housing Group) who are aiming to submit the first planning applications in 2024; and planning permission and Housing Infrastructure (HIF) Funding is in place to deliver a dual-carriageway link road between the A133 and the A120.

The Garden Community makes provision for employment land close to the University of Essex and the existing Knowledge Gateway development for further growth in the knowledge-based sectors and a further industrial business park close to the proposed junction of the link road onto the A120 for more general business and industrial activities.

The proposed link road brings the opportunity for stronger links between the north and south of the Tendring District and between the University of Essex and the A120 corridor. Whilst the Garden Community itself provides for a significant amount of new employment land, the Council will be keen to understand whether this development and associated infrastructure has the potential to generate additional demand for employment premises over and above existing allocations for which the review of the Local Plan could cater – without prejudice to the delivery of the Garden Community itself and growth in the wider North Essex and Freeport areas.

Levelling Up

The Tendring area has been identified by government as an area for Levelling Up, both through the setting up of a 'Levelling Up Partnership' and through the grant of Levelling Up Fund for town centre regeneration schemes in Clacton and Dovercourt. The Council has worked with partners to progress the Levelling Up schemes in these areas and has also produced a Place Plan for Jaywick Sands that contains a series of interventions aimed at tackling specific issues around deprivation and flood risk that

are currently unfunded, but that could form an important basis for future discussions with government and other funding agencies around Levelling Up.

The Levelling Up programme for Clacton in particular requires the development of a Plan for the Town and provides the opportunity for the Council to review its objectives for economic growth to determine whether there could or should be other drivers of economic growth aside from housing-led population growth to increase the demand for goods and services, or whether there should be a particular mix of housing size, types and tenures that would optimise the conditions for economic growth.

Demand for expansion and relocation

The Council is aware, both through formal and informal approaches, of some businesses – particularly in manufacturing and logistics, outgrowing their premises, having to operate inefficiently from multiple locations and suffering as a result of increasing energy and fuel costs. In some areas, the expansion of business activities in old, outdated and inefficient buildings has given rise to environmental conflicts with neighbouring residential areas.

A number of businesses have been actively considering relocation outside of the Tendring District, but many rely on a local workforce and would wish to remain in the Tendring area if possible. It is understood that the existing sites allocated for employment use in the Local Plan are not always available or suitable for their needs and so some are considering submitting planning applications to develop un-allocated sites within the district – with a particular interest in locations along the A120, A133 and A12 corridors.

Whilst the Local Plan policies on employment land do allow for employment-related development outside of specifically-allocated sites (having regard to their potential to support economic growth in the district and the requirements of other policies in the Local Plan), there is a level of uncertainty that presents a risk to businesses looking to exercise that flexibility – whereas land specifically allocated for employment land purposes, offer greater certainty and less risk.

Relocation of existing businesses located on existing employment sites close to centres of population to greenfield sites along the A12, A120 and A133 poses concerns about the workforce having to travel further to work and the associated cost to workers and carbon emissions. This is a factor to be weighed against the positives of relocation and where consideration of transport mitigation may be necessary.

Relocation from one site to another results in vacancy which can either be seen as a negative if vacated units cannot be sold or let, or a positive in enabling new and growing smaller business to find a foothold in the local area.

Proposed approach to the Local Plan review

The Council is considering a Local Plan review that extends the plan period to 2041 to comply with paragraph 22 of the NPPF and the expectation for 15 years post-adoption, anticipating adoption in or before January 2026.

In carrying out the review, the Council is also looking to update rather than re-write as much of the current Local Plan to roll forward the main aims and objectives and maintain a consistent look and feel to the Plan - only changing policies that require changing and only updating evidence that requires updating.

With this in mind, and the fact that the time-frame for the current adopted Local Plan and the updated Local Plan will overlap, the Council is not looking to re-assess the supply of existing employment land to be protected through Policy PP6 – a policy that has only been in place since January 2022 and which was based on relatively up to date evidence. Therefore, unless there are particular economic or other reasons to do so, the Council will not actively be looking to de-designate any of the existing protected employment sites. Similarly with the 32 hectares of employment land across the six allocated employment sites listed in Policy PP7, the Council will not be looking to review or consider the de-allocation of any of these sites – particularly given their planning status with all either consented or under construction.

The Council will however be looking to consider whether or not any additional strategic employment land allocations (or broad locations) over and above those listed in Policy PP7 could or should be identified, in light of the factors listed in the introduction above – in particular the designation of Freeport East and the associated implementation of the Bathside Bay Container Port planning permission – factors that were not prevalent or so advanced at the time of preparing the current Local Plan.

The Economic Strategy will need to be revisited alongside the Local Plan review, as part of this commission, to provide direction for the period post 2024 and to reflect any notable changes in the baseline economy and the nature of emerging growth sectors post Covid-19; and specific advancement in the status of the principal growth locations – i.e. with Clacton on Sea and Jaywick Sands being recognised at a national level for Levelling Up; Harwich & Dovercourt being at the heart of Freeport East with Bathside Bay identified as a Tax Site; and the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community progressing rapidly through the planning process, supported with HIF funding and a strong lead developer in Latimer/Clarion.

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The scope and objectives of the study will be as follows:

1. To undertake a light-touch review of relevant strategies, projections, evidence and latest baseline information and economic forecasts to determine a rolled-forward employment land requirement for Tendring to 2041, or scenarios/ranges based on different levels of housing growth and the potential impact of development at Bathside Bay/Freeport East and the Levelling-Up agenda for Clacton on Sea and Jaywick Sands.
2. Specifically, in relation to 1 above, to 'sense check' the Tendring Economic Strategy and identify any necessary changes to its vision and objectives to apply to the period 2025-2030 - specifically in response to notable changes in

the economic baseline and projections post Covid-19 and the advancement of Levelling Up funding/support, Freeport status and progress at Bathside Bay and the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community.

3. To advise on the potential/need for additional employment land over and above the existing 32 hectares of allocated land in the current Local Plan and the sectors that could be attracted to the district on those sites.
4. To provide a light-touch review of existing land allocations and reaffirm fitness for purpose, taking into account recent patterns of supply/loss.
5. Through targeted consultation with the business sector, consider and comment on the role that additional employment sites might have in supporting the expansion, diversification and energy efficiency of existing businesses in the district and freeing up premises on existing sites to meet the needs of new and existing businesses.
6. To align with the NPPF and the Economic Development Strategy, identify and meet the different needs of various sectors based on their location. This means providing opportunities for knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries to form clusters or networks; and for storage and distribution operations to operate at different scales and in accessible places.
7. Review and update the assessment criteria/process for assessing potential employment sites and apply that assessment to sites put forward by the Council for consideration and any other relevant and reasonable site options submitted by third parties through the Local Plan call for sites exercise.
8. Advise on the positive and negative impacts that development on these sites might have on the continued viability of existing protected and allocated employment sites and on the deliverability of sites outside of the district in the wider North Essex economic corridor and Freeport East area.
9. Advise on the means by which the transport network and public transport provision might need to be developed and improved to provide sustainable access for the workforce and suppliers to any new strategic employment sites.

KEY OUTPUTS

- A report containing the above including any recommendations, if necessary, for changes to the economic strategy and relevant planning policies.
- A revised employment land requirement for the period to 2041, or range of figures in hectares, derived from the light-touch review of relevant strategies, existing evidence and latest baseline information and economic forecasts.

- An assessment of potential employment site options against an agreed assessment methodology that can inform decisions on site selection – which will include consideration of impact on existing employment areas and the wider economy; and on transport to work provision.
- Advice on a recommended approach to the allocation of additional strategic employment sites for consideration through the review of the Local Plan.
- Potentially, contribute towards representations and attendance at an Examination in Public.

RELEVANT BACKGROUND STUDIES (with hyperlinks)

Tendring Local Plan Documents

[Tendring District Local Plan](#)

[Economic Strategy November 2019 \(Regeneris\)](#)

[Economic Baseline Update November 2019 \(Regeneris\)](#)

[Tendring Employment Land Review September 2019 \(ELR\)](#)

[Tendring District Council - Call for Sites](#)

[Tendring Monitoring Report and SHLAA](#)

Tendring Colchester Garden Community

[Economic and Employment Study Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community December 2022 \(Quod\)](#)

Regional Documents

[North Essex Economic Board Strategy](#)

[North Essex Economic Strategy \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)

[Freeport East - Felixstowe | Harwich | Gateway 14](#)

[Colchester Local Plan](#)

In particular, detailed work on economic growth aspects of the proposed Garden Communities was completed to inform Section 1 of the Colchester and Tendring Local Plans and is available on the Section 1 website hosted by Braintree, including:

[EB009 Garden Communities NEGC Employment and Demographic Studies April 2017 \(Braintree District Council\)](#)

[EB033 NEGC Economic Narrative November 2017 Garden City Developments \(Braintree District Council\)](#)

[EB081 Employment Provision for the North Essex Garden Communities July 2019 – Braintree District Council](#)

Government Guidance

[Housing and economic needs assessment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

QUOTATION PROCESS

The Council wishes to appoint consultants (**a single firm or consortium headed by a single practice acting as lead consultant**) to undertake a phased/modular commission in which the Council's express approval or instruction will be required before consultants proceed to each successive phase or module of the commission.

Bidders are invited to suggest a phased/modular approach to this commission as part of their proposed methodology.

Whilst at this stage the Council fully expects to undertake all of the work identified in each phase/module, consultants should note that if concerns emerge over funding and/or financial viability during the course of the specified work, then the Council may decide to terminate the commission on the satisfactory completion of any one of the modules. **Consultants are therefore asked to clearly cost each module as part of their quotation/tender submission.**

DURATION AND TIMING

- Closing date for receipt of questions about the Specification of Requirements: Thursday 18th April 2024
- Closing date for receipt of tenders/quotations: Thursday 2nd May
- Review of quotations/tenders: Week commencing 6th May
- Interviews for top bidders (if required): 9th/10th May (via Microsoft Teams)
- Award of contract: Friday 10th May
- Draft Interim Report: Friday 30th August
- Final Report: Monday 30th September
- Project completion no later than: Tuesday 31st December 2024

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The Council's Client Team will be led by Gary Guiver. The day to day project management will be led by Anthony Brindley. Consultants should identify their nominated Project Director and Project Manager as part of their submission.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

Consultants should specify the process/methodology to be used in the completion of each of the tasks identified in the Specification of Requirements. Consultants should also identify any anticipated risks and/or constraints in delivering the outputs required and outline their proposed solution(s) to mitigate these factors. Any further general measures identified that may assist in achieving the objectives of this work should be identified separately.

Consultants will need to schedule and accommodate regular meetings with the Council's Client Team against each module as part of their programme of work

PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY

The Council expects all work it commissions via consultants to be of the highest quality in terms of intellectual content and accuracy, as well as presentation. Consultants should include in their submission a Quality Plan or Statement demonstrating how they will achieve high quality outputs and who will be accountable for the review of outputs prior to their submission to the Council.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about this commission please direct any enquiries by email to planningbusiness@tendringdc.gov.uk by the closing date for questions Thursday 18th April 2024.