

PLANNING POLICY AND LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

10 FEBRUARY 2025

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY

A.3 AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT 2023 - 24

(Report prepared by William Fuller)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To report to the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee the findings of the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), which monitors the key indicators set out in the adopted Local Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Authority's Monitoring Report

Following the Authority Monitoring Report for 2022/2023, presented to and considered by the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee in December 2023, Officers have prepared a further Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR) for the 2023/24 financial year. This report presents high level information in relation to the key indicators set out in the monitoring chapter of the Local Plan.

The AMR includes chapters relating to the Local Development Scheme, Housing Delivery, and Employment, Commercial and Retail development. There is also information about the provision of infrastructure and community facilities, protection of the natural and historic environments, and the Tourism Strategy.

The structure of the report enables an annual update that will be beneficial to the process of reviewing and updating the Local Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee:

- a) notes the content of this report; and
- b) notes that the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) forms a baseline assessment of the key monitoring indicators set out in the Local Plan which will help inform the review of the Local Plan.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Monitoring against the key indicators set out in the Local Plan is important to inform the scope of priorities of the review of the Local Plan and to help identify areas where changes in policy or approaches to decision making might need to change in response to emerging issues.

This report contributes to a number of priorities established in the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028, including creating opportunities, championing our local environment, and working with partners to improve quality of life.

RESOURCES AND RISK

Local Plan monitoring has been undertaken by the Council's Planning Policy Team within the agreed Local Plan Budget.

The AMR presents factual data and observations about the key monitoring indicators set out in the Local Plan and has been prepared by officers within the Planning Policy Team.

LEGAL

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by Part 6 Section 113 of the Localism Act 2011) the Council is required to publish a regular monitoring report which monitors and reviews the progress made with the Local Plan and the extent to which its planning policies are being successfully implemented. Part 8 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) sets out the requirements for the content of these 'authority monitoring reports.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Area or Ward affected: All wards.

Consultation/Public Engagement: None

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Local Plan includes a table that identifies broad policy areas, Local Plan objectives relevant to those areas, and key indicators that can be used to understand how the policies are performing. This AMR is the second to have been undertaken since the adoption of the Local Plan in January 2022. It covers the period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024, and reports on the monitoring indicators set out in Chapter 11 of the Local Plan.

Whereas AMR's used to be a statutory requirement and formed part of the Council's formal reporting to central Government, they are now a local tool that can enable the Council to monitor the effectiveness of its own plan and helps inform any reviews and updates to the Local Plan. This AMR will be published on the Council's website and will, along with future updates, form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan review.

Local Development Scheme

This section reiterates those points made within the previously published Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS is a timetable on the progress of the Local Plan and other planning documents. The LDS was last updated in July 2024 and a brief overview is given on the progress made. Further specific updates to the LDS are proposed as part of a separate report on the Committee's agenda.

Housing Delivery

This section provides a snapshot in time for the approval and delivery of housing development in Tendring. Broadly the numbers show that we are delivering significantly above the 550 dwellings per year required by the Local Plan and the Council maintained a healthy position in respect of its five-year housing land supply target in the year 2023/24. From separate reports the Committee will however be aware that the district housebuilding target is set to change from 2026 to a mandatory government-set target of 1,034 homes per annum which needs to be addressed through the Local Plan review and against which maintaining an ongoing five-year supply of deliverable housing sites is expected to be very challenging.

Employment, Commercial and Retail Development

The Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) evaluates the new employment sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan to determine the remaining available land for development. As of October 2024, the latest data indicates that the total remaining employment land is 61.2 hectares, comprising 28.2 hectares allocated specifically for employment use and 33.0 hectares as part of mixed-use allocations. Most of these sites are progressing well, with initial efforts focused on developing the planning applications which have now been submitted for the majority of the sites. Additionally, existing employment sites still have a capacity of 11.27 hectares (April 2024). The Local Plan review will include an updated assessment of the employment land required up to 2041, and additional qualitative land allocations may be necessary.

The Local Plan aims to enhance the vitality and viability of town centres by leveraging growth benefits while preserving their character. The key indicator for evaluating these planning policies is retail floorspace capacity.

In Clacton-on-Sea, there are 303 retail and service outlets with a vacancy rate of 15.18%, higher than the UK average. A £20 million improvement programme is underway to address this. Frinton-on-Sea has 128 outlets with a notably lower vacancy rate of 7.03%, indicating a thriving town centre.

Walton-on-the-Naze, with 98 outlets and a vacancy rate of 13.27% representing a slightly lower vacancy rates compared to the UK averages, suggesting a healthy retail environment. Dovercourt has 113 outlets with a higher vacancy rate of 16.81%, but the overall unoccupied space is slightly less than the national average. The Council is investing in revitalising the town centre. Brightlingsea, with 81 outlets, has a remarkably low vacancy rate of 3.70%, indicating a highly occupied and thriving retail environment. Manningtree has 69 outlets with a vacancy rate of 14.49%, slightly above the UK average, but the floorspace vacancy rate is below the national average, suggesting efficient use of retail space and opportunities for new businesses.

Infrastructure Provision, Education and Health

The AMR provides details of infrastructure projects delivered in the year 2023/2024, as well as infrastructure and community facilities secured through planning obligations. Two large development schemes submitted details of the ultrafast fibre broadband that would be provided to future occupiers. A number of planning applications also provided contributions toward public open space and play equipment.

Over £180,000 was secured through new S106 agreements for healthcare improvements. Of money secured through planning applications from previous years, over £600,000 was spent in 2023/2024 on improvements to healthcare facilities in the District.

A number of planning applications have been accompanied by financial contributions towards education in the district in the year 2023/24. The District Council does not collect these contributions or assign where they will be spent. Rather, Essex County Council has a formula which calculates the amounts collected and determines where funds should be spent.

The Historic Environment

In 2020 the Council adopted its Heritage Strategy, which aims to celebrate and enhance the heritage of Tendring. The strategy includes 35 actions and 3 local projects, categorised into high, medium and low priorities. The aims of the strategy are supported by Local Plan policies, and the AMR provides an overview and update on the status of these recommendations.

One of the most significant heritage projects undertaken in the 2023/24 year and the following, was the preparation and adoption of a number of Conservation Area Character Appraisals. After a period of public consultation seven Conservation Area Appraisals were adopted by the Council in July 2024. A further six Appraisals were also the subject of public consultation in that year and are due to be adopted in January 2025.

The Natural Environment

The main indicator identified within the Local Plan to monitor Biodiversity is the implementation of the Essex Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) SPD. The AMR for 2023/24 provides an update on work undertaken using contributions secured from new residential

development, including joint working with Share Our Shores and the voluntary sector to host public engagement events and continue to engage with the public at habitat sites.

In the year 2023/24, the Environment Agency objected to three planning applications within Tendring on the basis of flood risk. All three applications had an initial holding objection from the Environment Agency which was subsequently overcome by the preparation of a flood risk assessment and the applications were approved.

Tourism Promotion

The Local Plan plays a crucial role in fostering development that boosts the tourism sector, aligning with the Prosperous and Protected Places chapters. The latest Tourism Strategy focuses on increasing visitor numbers, boosting economic benefits, and enhancing the visitor experience. From 2019 to 2023, Tendring saw a strong post-pandemic recovery in tourism, with total trips rising to 5,672,600 in 2023, from a low of 2,690,000 in 2020. Staying trips and day trips also increased, though total staying spend slightly decreased to £84,864,000. However, total day trip spend rose significantly to £212,418,000, leading to a marginal increase in total visitor spend to £308,210,000. The total tourism value slightly decreased to £413,282,000.

To improve the visitor offer, the Local Plan and Tourism Strategy are enhancing high-quality attractions and accommodations. Key initiatives include allocating land for hotels and leisure facilities, repurposing town centre buildings, improving public spaces, developing The Sunspot business centre, and supporting various local projects like Walton's Maritime Museum and Brightlingsea Lido. These efforts aim to attract and retain visitors by improving facilities, accessibility, and the overall environment.

Moving Forward

The AMR is an iterative document and represents a snapshot in time in any particular year. Therefore, much of the work undertaken as part of the Local Plan Review, which took place after April 2024, has not been included within this version of the AMR. Work has already started on the 2024/ 25 AMR which will begin to include more of the evidence compiled for the updated Local Plan and will be reported to Members in due course.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) April 2023 – March 2024

Background Documents

None