

PLANNING POLICY AND LOCAL PLAN COMMITTEE

28 MAY 2025

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PLANNING AND COMMUNITY)

A.2 LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – EVIDENCE BASE UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

(Report prepared by Paul Woods)

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee with an update on the progress of three key pieces of evidence that will inform the review of the Local Plan, and to set out the next steps in undertaking the Local Plan Review process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is important that policies and proposals in Local Plans are informed and underpinned by proportionate but robust technical evidence. Preparation and updates of various elements of the 'evidence base' to inform the current review of the Local Plan are under way, and findings of three of these reports are set out below.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), conducted by HDH Planning & Development, provides a comprehensive analysis of housing needs in Tendring District. The assessment uses the Standard Method housing target of 1,034 homes per year, projecting a need for 17,578 new homes over a 17-year period. Key findings include a significant increase in the older population, a higher proportion of owner-occupied housing, and a growing private rented sector. The SHMA identifies the need for various types and tenures of housing, including affordable homes, sheltered housing, extra care units, and accessible homes. These findings will inform the approach taken to different types and tenures of housing in the Local Plan and well as assisting the determination of Planning applications. This piece of evidence has now been finalised and is being published as an appendix to this report in order that it can be used as a material consideration when determining Planning applications, in accordance with policy LP2 in the adopted Local Plan.

The Employment Land Review, being undertaken by Ekosgen, updates the existing evidence from 2019, advising on the need for additional employment land. The study considers four scenarios: an employment led scenario, a higher growth scenario, a past take-up scenario, and the labour supply approach. The different approaches to demand assessment suggests an overall employment land requirement ranging from 5.36 ha to 30.69 ha. Although this quantitative demand can be met through existing employment allocations, the review highlights the need for additional land allocations to accommodate qualitative requirements for certain sizes and types of development in different sectors, particularly in strategic locations around major roads.

Jacobs/Essex Highways have conducted a qualitative assessment of transport infrastructure and services required to accommodate growth in the District, with a particular focus on the proposed garden villages. The study prioritises sustainable modes of transport, with the aim of reducing reliance on cars and improving accessibility. It evaluates the transport sustainability of ten key areas for growth, identifying opportunities and challenges for each location. The next stage of work will involve detailed transport modelling to assess the impact of developments on specific sites on the highways network and support sustainable travel approaches.

Following the Issues and Options Consultation, Officers will prepare the Preferred Options draft of the Local Plan, which will include updated policies and draft allocations for various types of development. Further technical work and testing will be undertaken, including a Sustainability Appraisal, detailed transport modelling, viability testing, a Water Cycle Study, and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Engagement with technical stakeholders and neighbouring authorities will continue, ensuring the Plan is based on robust evidence and the Council continues to meet its duty to cooperate.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee notes the contents of this report and the progress made on updating the Local Plan evidence base to date.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

Ensuring the District has an up-to-date Local Plan is a statutory duty and 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. It is also the goal of government for local planning authorities to deliver sustainable development and coordinated provision of housing, jobs and infrastructure whilst best protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment.

There is a requirement to review and update Local Plans every five years. In its meetings since 20 December 2023, the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee has already considered and agreed:

- a set of overarching guiding principles, which have been updated as necessary in light of the District's new housing target;
- the carrying out of two 'call for sites' consultations;
- a revised vision and objectives statement for consultation;
- four high-level spatial strategy options for consultation;
- an Issues & Options Consultation Document;
- revisions to the Local Development Scheme (LDS) setting out the overarching work programme and timetable; and,

- the baseline housing position at April 2024 for the purposes of the Local Plan Review.

Establishing a robust and up-to-date evidence base is essential when preparing a Local Plan. Once the Local Plan is submitted for examination, the Planning Inspector will look to the evidence that was used to develop the policies within the Plan to ensure that they are sound and justified.

RESOURCES AND RISK

The overall review and update of the Local Plan will, as it has been to date, be managed by the Council's Planning Team utilising funds from the agreed Local Plan budget. The work on the Local Plan considered by the Planning Policy and Local Plan Committee up until now has been carried out mainly by Officers in-house; however, parts of the evidence base are being prepared by external specialist consultants with key elements of this work already under way. With the Government confirming significant changes to housebuilding targets and making them mandatory, the scope of certain studies have been revisited to ensure they reflect the up-to-date position, and Officers have been in discussions with relevant consultants in that regard. There could be some additional costs associated with the additional work required which have the potential to be met within existing budgets, and that will need to be re-evaluated and kept closely under review.

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. As part of the examination process carried out by a government-appointed Planning Inspector, the Council will need to demonstrate the Local Plan's legal compliance and 'soundness' which, amongst other things will include compliance with national planning policy and any government requirements around housebuilding.

Third parties can apply for a Judicial Review if they feel the Council has 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 NPPF place Local Plans at the heart of the planning system, so it is essential that they are in place and kept up to date. The NPPF expects Local Plans to set out a vision and a framework for the future development of the area, addressing the needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure – as well as as a basis for safeguarding the environment.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) state that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the 'development plan' unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory 'development plan' for Tendring includes the Tendring District Local Plan

2013-2033 and Beyond Sections 1 and 2, as well as adopted Neighbourhood Plans and the Essex Minerals and Waste Local Plans. The NPPF states that where the development plan is out of date permission should be granted for sustainable development unless any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits or other policies indicate otherwise. It is therefore important to ensure the Local Plan is reviewed, and updated where necessary, to ensure the development plan does not become out of date.

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 33 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).”* All of this work will now need to consider options in the context of significantly higher housebuilding targets if they are confirmed by the Government following NPPF consultation.

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. 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, that decision will be one for Full Council.

The new Government is expected to announce further changes to planning legislation and guidance in the coming year which could include the anticipated arrangements for plan-making at both a strategy combined authority level and at unitary or district level – however, these are not expected to override current legislative and regulatory requirements around Local Plan production or impact on plans that are already progressing through the plan-making process. Advice from Government officials has been for Councils to push ahead with current Local Plan work as this will both ensure comprehensive plan coverage across the country is maintained and that evidence and work on current plans can inform the production of new-style Strategic and Local Plans when it comes to future review.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Area or Ward affected: All wards – with a likelihood that most parts of the district may have to play a role in the delivery of new homes to meet the Government’s new mandatory housebuilding targets.

Consultation/Public Engagement: The Local Plan Review involves the same statutory stages of Consultation and Public Engagement as the original preparation of the Local Plan. Given the significance of the Local Plan Review and the scale of development the Council is now having to plan for, Officers have already been making efforts to engage early with Town, Parish and Ward Councillors across the District – particularly in locations where emerging options for growth indicate the potential for development of significant scale. Officers have already met with a number of affected Town and Parish Councils, and it is intended that meetings will continue throughout the Local Plan Review process.

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

It is important that policies and proposals in Local Plans are informed and underpinned by proportionate but robust technical evidence. Preparation and updates of various elements of the ‘evidence base’ to inform the current review of the Local Plan are under way, and findings of three of these reports are set out below.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

The Council commissioned expert consultants HDH Planning & Development to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to inform the Local Plan Review. The same consultants supported the Council through the last Local Plan process and successfully demonstrated to the Planning Inspector that the evidence they prepared around housing need was robust and sound. The work this time was undertaken in two parts – the first part before the Government confirmed the District’s new housing target, and the second part once the housing target was confirmed. This ensured that the evidence is up-to-date based on the most recent government policy around housing need, as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance. Although the housing target may need to be recalculated as Local Plan progresses, the consultants have confirmed that the findings of the SHMA can still be relied upon to understand the breakdown of housing size and tenures required in the District (disaggregation) – although a short addendum may be required at the time the Plan is submitted for examination. This piece of evidence has now been finalised and is being published as an appendix to this report in order that it can be used as a material consideration when determining Planning applications, in accordance with policy LP2 in the adopted Local Plan.

The SHMA uses the Standard Method housing target as at December 2024: 1,034 dwellings per year. This equates to 17,578 new homes over a 17-year plan period. The District’s population is expected to grow significantly over that period – with a notable increase in the older population (aged 65 and over) by 43.6% by 2041. The working age population (aged 16-64), however, is expected to grow by a smaller amount of 11.5% over the same period. The projected change in populations over this period has been provided at an early stage to Ekosgen, the consultants undertaking our

Employment Land Study, to ensure that those models accurately reflect a changing population in the District.

The report demonstrates that Tendring has a higher proportion of owner-occupied housing without a mortgage compared to regional and national averages, reflecting a higher proportion of retired people, although the private rented sector has grown significantly with a 23.4% increase between 2011 and 2021. House prices in Tendring are generally lower than regional averages, but affordability remains a real issue due to lower local incomes.

The SHMA sets out the need for different types and tenures of housing and will be an important consideration for both the Local Plan Review and the determination of large-scale planning applications. Using the Affordable Housing Need model (set out in Chapter 6 of the assessment), the annual need for affordable homes is calculated at 275, which represents 26.6% of the annual planned growth. Using the Long-Term Balancing Housing Markets model (set out in Chapter 5), the SHMA reports that 14.6% of new housing should be Affordable Rented/Social Rented, and 7.3% should be affordable home ownership (including Shared Ownership and First Homes) – as this would best address the needs of the local population. Within Affordable Rented/Social Rented Sector, between 80-85% should be Social Rented by the end of the plan-period, because Social Rented accommodation is most appropriate for the majority of households in this sector.

Chapter 7 of the report considers the housing requirement of particular groups of the population. There is a projected need for 2,805 additional units of Sheltered housing for older people/retirement housing and 765 additional Extra care units/supported living housing by 2041. An additional 425 Registered Care spaces (nursing and residential care homes) will be required over the plan period. The SHMA identifies a need for 9,279 accessible and adaptable homes (M4(2) Category 2) and 1,544 wheelchair user dwellings (M4(3) Category 3) by 2041.

Employment Land Review

The Council has commissioned expert consultants Ekosgen to undertake an Employment Land Review, to update the evidence that was last undertaken in 2019. The study will advise on the need for additional employment land over and above the land already allocated in the current Local Plan. Officers currently have an early draft of the report which will be subject to further stakeholder engagement before being finalised and published as part of the Local Plan evidence base.

In line with the Planning Practice Guidance, four different approaches have been considered in the assessment of future employment land needs across the Local Plan period.

- The **employment led (baseline labour demand) scenario** is based on bespoke employment forecasts provided by Cambridge Econometrics (dated July 2024).

Overall employment in Tendring is expected to increase by 4,500 jobs over the period 2024-41. Under this baseline scenario, for the period 2024-41 it is expected that requirements will

be greatest for B2 (industrial) and B8 (warehousing) employment land. These Use Classes show land requirements of 1.16 ha and 3.59 ha respectively out of a **total of 5.36 ha**.

- A **higher growth scenario** represents a 'policy on' scenario which takes account of local priority sectors, planned developments and infrastructure changes that are not reflected in the baseline labour demand scenario. This scenario projects a significantly higher employment land requirement (**30.69 ha in total**), comprising 16.09 ha B2 (industrial) land and 11.37 ha B8 (warehousing) land.
- The **past take-up scenario** is based on the delivery of employment floorspace over the period 2000-2023. This scenario forecasts that **17.01 ha** employment land will be required, comprising of 11.06 ha for B8 (warehousing).
- The **labour supply approach** is based on how the local labour force is affected by the proposed housing delivery in the district to 2041. Under this scenario, for the period 2024-41, it is anticipated that the total requirement for employment land will be **17.02 ha**.

The demand assessment suggests there is an overall employment land requirement for between 5.36 ha (Baseline Labour Demand scenario) and 30.69 ha (Higher Growth scenario). The requirements associated with Labour Supply and Past Trends scenarios broadly sit within the middle of this range (17.02 ha and 17.01 ha, respectively). The report is clear that planning for future employment land on the basis of the baseline labour demand scenario would be unduly pessimistic and would likely fail to accommodate the future requirements associated with Freeport East and the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community.

A total supply of 59.2ha of land has been identified through allocated sites and sites with Planning permission, which is more than sufficient, in quantitative terms, to meet the needs of the most optimistic scenario. However, it is important to consider the needs of different use classes, and not all of the current allocations will be in the right location or of the right type to meet future needs. There is strong interest, for example, around major roads such as the A120, A133 and the A12 corridors. The study has assessed sites submitted through the Council's Call for Sites consultation and identified a significant amount (203.79ha) of land as good quality for allocation.

There are strong indications that the Local Plan should therefore seek to allocate additional land for employment development, to respond to the modern economy, provide greater choice in the market, and meet occupier demand. Vacancy levels in Tendring are low - <5% in the office market and <2% in the industrial market – so there is a need to ensure that planning policy supports new employment development.

There are more detailed findings contained within the draft report which, once tested through stakeholder engagement, will be able to inform not just the Local Plan Review but also the wider work of the Council – in particular the Economic Growth team.

Transport Modelling

In the autumn of 2024, Jacobs/Essex Highways began work assessing the emerging spatial strategy options that would form part of our Issues and Options consultation. This was a qualitative exercise, focussing on the strengths and weaknesses of existing transport infrastructure and services to accommodate future housing growth in the District (with a particular focus on the proposal for new garden villages) with respect to opportunities for public transport use, active travel and self-containment of trips.

To comply with the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), development proposals must adhere to the following key principals:

- **Prioritising sustainable modes:** The NPPF encourages planning decisions that prioritise walking, cycling and public transport over car travel.
- **Reducing reliance on cars:** Developments should be designed to minimise the need for car travel by locating them close to existing services, amenities, and transport infrastructure.
- **Improving accessibility:** New developments should be well-connected to public transport networks, cycle lanes, and pedestrian routes.
- **Addressing travel demand:** Planning applications should assess the potential transport impacts of the development and propose measures to mitigate any negative effects.

The study evaluated the emerging spatial options through a sustainable transport lens but also acknowledged that while prioritising sustainable travel is a key focus, new development will inevitably put pressure on the existing highway network. The study therefore includes an initial high-level assessment of the potential highways impacts to aid with the refinement of the spatial strategy options.

The project objectives were as follows:

- Identify transport issues related to different emerging spatial options for site allocations through high-level analysis
- Identify opportunities to enhance sustainable travel in emerging spatial options and increase internalisation of trips through integration of land use and transport plans
- Provide recommendations on transport impacts and opportunities of site allocation options and where increased or decreased housing and employment quantities at site options should be considered

The early chapters of the study undertake an assessment of the existing situation in the District – focussing on the highway network, bus and rail services, cycle routes, and Public Rights of Way. They provide a high-level understanding of how mode share, travel time within and outside the District, and accessibility to key destinations influence travel choices. This helps to evaluate the transport sustainability of each location for potential development.

The study then goes on to look at 10 key areas for growth in the District, based on the strategy options included in the Issues and Options Consultation Document. Each of these areas is assessed to understand key impacts on the highway network, including the number of additional trips that would be generated; the public transport opportunities and limitations, including the number of additional bus and rail trips that would be generated; the proximity to existing cycle and walking routes and the number of additional trips that would be generated; the proximity to key attractors and amenities, and the level of trips that are likely to key locations; and the potential for internalisation (i.e. incorporating key facilities such as schools and shops within new development to reduce the need for daily car journeys which impact the highway network).

Key findings relating to each of the areas are set out below:

1. A120 Corridor

The proposed development of a garden village at Horsley Cross would require significant investment in public transportation and active travel infrastructure. A high frequency bus route and connection with Manningtree, Colchester and Harwich is the linchpin with supporting measures to increase its effectiveness. Suggested employment locations seem sensible given the proximity to the A120, Freeport and Colchester, although considerations around staff access to the sites is needed.

2. Ardleigh/TCB Garden Community

The success of the committed TCBGC and employment development hinges on addressing existing highways constraints and providing significantly improved public transport and active travel options. Further development in this location, such as an employment site to the north of the A120, seems sensible once the TCBGC has been established – ensuring the sustainable transport connectivity to the site is in place and accessible.

3. B1414 Corridor (Little Clacton to Great Oakley)

A proposed garden village at Thorpe has strong opportunities for sustainable access to the existing services in Thorpe-le-Soken and the rail station and will offer a centre for amenities for small settlements in the area. However, realising this potential depends on effectively addressing the transportation challenges, integrating public transport, prioritising active travel and addressing the A133 congestion.

4. Brightlingsea

There are a number of transport related issues identified within Brightlingsea – in particular capacity issues on the single road in and out of the town and the junction at Thorington Cross. Targeted improvements at these congestion points are needed. However, although this will be a constraint for any new development in Brightlingsea, the scale of development proposed through the Issues and Options strategies are unlikely to have a significant effect. Improving active travel into the town centre and public transport accessibility to the development will support mitigations from both this development and existing trip movements.

5. Harwich and Dovercourt

This location would require a multi-faceted approach to transportation improvements, focussing on highway upgrades, public transport enhancements and active travel infrastructure. Funding for public transport and active travel improvements is a recurring challenge and will require strategic planning and collaboration.

6. Clacton, Jaywick

Although there are no additional developments proposed in the Clacton, Jaywick and Holland on Sea area as part of the four strategy options, an assessment of the baseline and the impact of committed developments in the area was undertaken to ensure their impact on the A133 was fully considered as part of the other assessments.

7. Manningtree, Lawford and Mistley

The suggested development in this area hinges on significantly reducing reliance on short-distance car trips. This will require a combined approach of improving public transport (new bus routes), prioritising active travel (Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) routes), and addressing existing highway capacity issues. Securing external funding will be critical for delivering the necessary infrastructure improvements.

8. St Osyth and Point Clear

The size of the development proposed here is unlikely to generate trips which will significantly affect the highway network. Public transport and Active Travel improvements will support the reduction of short trips both from the new development and existing residents.

9. Sunshine Coast Line Corridor

These developments will rely heavily on highway works at Frating and Weeley roundabouts, to mitigate highway issues from increased demand but also through construction traffic. The proposal for a garden village at Weeley appears to offer a sustainable location for larger-scale development due to its multi-modal access and proximity to the rail station. Development of both Weeley and Frating Garden Villages should be coordinated to maximize the benefits of shared infrastructure and services, particularly regarding public transport improvements (also including Thorpe-le-Soken if development there were to be progressed).

Larger development at both Weeley and Thorpe, with strong links to Frating, would support lobbying for increased rail frequency, and development at one or more of these garden villages would be seen as essential for supporting splitting the inter-urban bus routes (allowing them to be more efficient, higher frequency, and align more closely with local needs.)

10. Walton and Frinton

The size of the developments suggested here are unlikely to have a significant effect on the current network. However, there are some key opportunities to improve access to rail from each development site and into the towns. Improving active travel into the town centres and

public transport accessibility to the developments will help mitigate the impact from both new development and existing trip movements, as well as supporting tourist trips between towns.

It is important to note that the highways model doesn't fully reflect the issues we know about locally through Thorpe High Street, and this has been an important topic of our discussions with Thorpe-le-Soken Parish Council in particular. There are significant local concerns around peak-time disruption through the centre of the village, as well as slow moving traffic at many other times of day. Although the length of delays may not be significant enough to show up on the technical model (possibly because traffic tends to continue moving slowly through the village rather than reaching full gridlock), the impact of any new development will nevertheless need to be carefully considered – and any necessary improvements or mitigations secured. Likewise, the full depth of concerns raised by residents of Brightlingsea about highways capacity in and out of the town don't appear to be born out by the highways modelling. Targeted improvements will be required, but the evidence suggests that development of the scale suggested in the Issues and Options consultation will not have a significant impact. As further work is undertaken around transport modelling, and particularly as specific sites are brought forward, Officers will keep the conclusions around these locations under close review to ensure local concerns are not overlooked as the technical evidence is prepared.

The analysis concludes that none of the spatial options for garden village locations could be ruled out, but each presents unique challenges. Although Horsley Cross would require significant investment in sustainable transport, and a rapid bus connection would be required to link to both Harwich and Colchester, with strong bus and cycle connectivity to Manningtree to access amenities and the Great Eastern Mainline. There is potential for greater build out in the location if there could be internalisation of trips through the provision of school, health, and employment opportunities. Frating/Hare Green is located within reasonable distance of Great Bentley Rail Station, and this could support connections to Colchester and Clacton. Weeley and Thorpe offer the most opportunities because of existing rail stations and being in close proximity to local amenities and Clacton and Frinton/Walton. However, issues around land suitability and tangible issues around highways congestion in the centre of Thorpe raise serious concerns about the deliverability of large-scale development here.

The next stage of work will be to provide transport evidence related to the size and location of garden villages against a backdrop of continued growth in centres across Tendring. The work will identify the most suitable approaches to sustainable travel for each garden village to mitigate severe impact on the highway network and support wider sustainability aims. These approaches can then inform and provide focus for detailed transport modelling tests of spatial options, which will assess the impact of new developments on the highways network and test the effectiveness of the sustainable travel approaches.

By taking this approach, the transport evidence will be more robust and aligned with NPPF requirements. It will also demonstrate that the Council is taking a sustainable travel first approach, which can often be lost when transport evidence overly grounded in highway transport models. This

work depends on further analysis of the sites submitted during the most recent consultation and is expected to start in the coming months.

As this work is being undertaken, Essex Highways will help to facilitate effective meetings and engagement between the Council and National Highways, who are responsible for key transport routes such as the A120. Any development that could affect the strategic road network will be closely scrutinised by this national body, and they will need to be satisfied that the evidence being prepared alongside the Local Plan is robust and complete.

Next steps

Following the conclusion of the Issues and Options Consultation, Officers will begin preparing the Preferred Options draft of the Local Plan. This will be first full draft of the updated Local Plan and will include updated policies and draft allocations for housing, employment, mixed-use and other kinds of development. It will also include other designations such as Strategic Green Gaps, safeguarded employment sites, Coastal Protection Belt and many others.

Officers are continuing to read and summarise the representations received during the recent consultation, and beginning to respond to each of the issues raised – so that the Council can demonstrate how these comments have been considered and what conclusions have been reached. The additional sites that were submitted during the most recent consultation period are also being assessed, which will help determine which sites are most suitable for development and begin to establish a strategy for meeting the district's new housing target.

Alongside this ongoing work, further technical studies and testing will take place around the emerging policies and allocations – to ensure that when the Preferred Options draft is ready for consultation the appropriate evidence is in place to support it. This will not be the full library of evidence that is required at Submission stage, as many of the documents will be in draft stages. This reflects the Preferred Options' status as an emerging draft of the Local Plan, which will need to change and evolve in response to the representations we receive in the autumn – and the emerging evidence and technical studies will be updated and iterated at the same time. Key pieces of evidence that will be taking place over the coming months, with support from external consultants, include the Sustainability Appraisal; the additional transport modelling discussed above; viability testing for the whole Plan; a Water Cycle Study; and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Engagement with technical stakeholders will also continue as the Preferred Options draft is prepared. Much of this work has already begun, and further work will need to be undertaken with key infrastructure providers such as Anglian Water and Affinity Water (through the work of the Water Cycle Study); Essex Highways and National Highways (through the work of the Transport Modelling); and local healthcare providers (through joint work with Colchester City Council). Other stakeholders such as the Environment Agency and Historic England will also be engaged as this work progresses, and neighbouring authorities will be invited to meet with Officers to discuss the emerging Local Plan under the duty to cooperate.

APPENDICES
Appendix 1 – Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2025

BACKGROUND PAPERS
None