

Wivenhoe Town Council - Matter 2 Hearing statement - Employment

Questions 6. Is there clear justification for selecting the comparator locations identified on p55 of EXD/052, rather than other comparator locations?

There is no justification.

A comparison of GCSE Mathematics grades for 2019 by county (<https://analytics.ofqual.gov.uk/apps/GCSE/County/>) demonstrates that at 31% Essex has the second lowest attainment level. This does not inspire confidence in raising the skills shortage. P69 of EXD/052 states that “Skill levels have improved substantially across the country, but North Essex has fewer NVQ4+ qualified workers than comparators, the region, or the country” (this is the report itself confirming the choice of comparators is flawed!). With low scoring academic and vocational qualifications, it is impossible to see the skills gap as anything other than an insurmountable blocker to growth (and narrowing the employment\population ratio). Put simply this has been holding the region back for decades and the likelihood that more overdevelopment will resolve the inherent inequalities that create the complex employment scenario (particularly in Tendring) is infinitesimally small.

Table 1

Comparator	% Mathematics Grade 6>
Essex	31
Cambridge	33.2
Milton Keynes (Beds)	28.7
Buckinghamshire	43.4
Oxfordshire	33.4
Berkshire	39.3
West Surrey (Surrey)	39.4
East Surrey (Surrey)	

Question 7. Is it reasonable to assume that, in the inward investment-led scenario, North Essex increases its employment-to-population ratio to that of the comparator regions by 2036 (para 2.4 of EB/081, p116 of EXD/052)?

It is not reasonable.

- 1) The skills shortage
- 2) Where is the inward investment? If the GC's were such a viable and attractive proposition how come the NEAs do not have a single employer lined up? (CBC FOI ref: 361086 – a copy can be provided)
- 3) There is no rail capacity as discussed elsewhere. The only capacity is the Sunshine Coast line from the coastal towns of Tendring to Colchester where there are – as yet – no GC's.

- 4) The additional road capacity should it ever materialise will be of equal disbenefit as it becomes easier to commute to areas with higher salaries.
- 5) The employment-to-population ratio does not account for skill level\salary so should not be used as the only performance indicator.
- 6) The economic effects of Brexit continue to be ignored – for example European projects fund the sciences that the skills growth relies on as well as some regional infrastructure.
- 7) The diluting effect of increased congestion on the desirability of employment investment – as congestion increases areas become less favourable for relocation.

In conclusion it is evident that employment-to-population ratio will not keep track with an increasing population across the region as employment will not be created faster than houses. Therefore, the ratio will fall and exponentially over time widen further still. What is more reasonable is to raise the employment-to-population ratio prior to population increase. With over ambitious and inappropriate projected housing numbers over the cycle of several local plan periods rather than just one this divergence will be amplified and we will see the employment-to-population continue to run in an opposite trend to the comparator locations.

Question 8. Is the percentage mix of employment sectors shown in Table 2 of EB/081 justified, having regard to the sectoral GVA shares identified in EXD/052, pp125-127?

It is not justified.

The NEA's have combined – as the mysterious and faceless North Essex Economic Board to publish the North Essex Economic Strategy October 19 which raise the following points;

- 1) North Essex Economic Strategy P5 1.3 “to create one job per home” If this were even remotely possible it would be because a large number of jobs in a specific sector would become accessible (construction or major manufacturer relocating) which means the sectoral mix is hard to justify at this nascent stage.
- 2) P8 2.5 “working age population has grown at a faster than national rate”. This affects the employment-to-population ration further still as described above. It also skews the sectors when compared with the comparators.
- 3) P17 4.5 states “recent research has highlighted the challenge that a general lack of ‘grow-on’ space presents to businesses once they have reached a stage at which they need to expand” this statement is utterly extraordinary given that the authors have not provided any future growth space for the knowledge gateway. The 170 hectares offered is surrounded by residential properties.

- 4) P24 6.4 states “we will explore the options for additional public sector employment through relocation” Which public sector entity is going to relocate to a NE coastal town! At a time when public sector jobs are being squeezed (CBC employs circa 600 people but in 2001 this was 1400. ECC employed 7,050 in January 2018 and reducing despite employing 12,000 plus people in 2012). Even more bizarrely this is the first option under the heading “Solutions and action”! The idea that the NEA’s will create posts – or even cease reducing them – or move offices to coastal towns (and by inference the GCs) is beyond negligible. This assertion is a microcosm of the reports inability to face up to the reality that NE and in particular the Tendring footprint are unemployment blackspots for a reason and that building thousands of homes for commuters in Wivenhoe\Colchester and Braintree will only serve to increase current inequalities. It also is deeply troubling that praying for a central government department to relocate here is portrayed as one of the NEA’s favoured solutions. If this “solution” was chosen for this report we dread to think what was omitted. It is also hugely significant that the local government authors of this report are not able – or are unwilling, because they know one job per home is impossible - to view this challenge from the private sector perspective.
- 5) EXD/052 p125 Table 37 has the sector of ‘public administration’ reducing from 18.8% of employment to 14.8% by 2071 yet we are still to believe that public sector employment will increase by P24 6.4 (North Essex Economic Strategy). It also shows ‘public administration’ as falling to 10.4% in comparator locations which further undermines the usefulness of the comparators and the North Essex Economic Strategy.
- 6) The sectors bare little correlation with North Essex current position as a net exporter of job outside of the region.

On a technical note

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva/datasets/regionalgvaibylcalauthor>
[ityintheuk is clear that NUTS3](#) data by local authority is only available for the last few years due to a change in methodology – this makes the comparison statistically shallow and not comprehensive enough to spot trends in sectoral shift using NUTS3.

The land allocated for retail has been reduced within the GC’s – with a higher allocation for B1 – and this reduction is not reflected in the employment sectors as a retail offering remains a core driver of increasing the number of internal journeys within the GC (both work and leisure).

We will wish to respond to the NEA’s response at the relevant point in the process.