

Essex County Council  
**Highways and Transportation**  
P O Box 11  
County Hall  
Chelmsford  
Essex CM1 1LX



Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2018

Our ECC/HE/NEGC/JPS  
ref:

Dear Mr Clews

**NORTH ESSEX AUTHORITIES  
Joint Strategic (Section 1) Plan, Examination in Public**

We write to underline the collaborative relationship that exists between the highway authorities in Essex and the Local planning Authority. We are aware that the EIP may have given rise to matters which possibly undermined how this collaboration is working in practice, simply due to the nature of separate responses being made to consultations and in the provision of evidence at the EIP etc.

In terms of forward planning there have been a number of combined efforts to understand the nature of long term planning for highway infrastructure to support growth in the area as well as addressing the current deficit in highway capacity for existing patterns of movement. These are examined in turn below, along with supporting evidence in the annexes to this letter where appropriate.

**1. NEGC and joint planning**

We have been at pains to ensure that even with the differing timescales, we have for road planning, and local plans that every effort has been made to ensure these are complimentary and self-reinforcing. To evidence this, we attach the schedule of meetings which as you will note includes representatives from DfT, Highways England, the County Council and Colchester Borough Council at a senior level. We also attach (for convenience) the Statement of Common Ground signing by both highway authorities) the most important paragraph of which is laid out below:

***Matters to Progress in collaboration***

The final boundaries and scale of the Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community are proposed to be fixed in the forthcoming Development Plan Document process. A draft document (Issues and Options) is currently out for consultation. Delivery of the garden community will be in phases and further work will be required and is ongoing to understand the level of impact of the development, what highway infrastructure including highway capacity and junction location (both local and strategic) will be required to support delivery and how that affects the merging preferred scheme option for the A12 widening.

The North Essex Authorities, together with ECC (as local highway authority) and Highways England will work together to ensure that the development of the garden community will facilitate and be coordinated with the A12 widening proposals and not delay the current proposed programmed start

of works of 2020/21. The emerging highway design of the A12 and its junctions will be coordinated to ensure that they can allow for and accommodate future additional infrastructure which may be required to enable future expansion and completion of the garden community as well as other connections to the strategic road network. It is agreed that any additional funding necessary for the ongoing delivery of the garden community will lie outside the funding of the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme as detailed in the Road Investment Strategy.

As with the final A12 alignment, any proposed preferred option for the A120 will need to be taken into account in settling the detailed boundaries and scale of the proposed garden community. The North Essex Authorities, together with ECC and Highways England will continue to work together to ensure the A120 preferred route option and the planning for the Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community takes place in a coordinated manner.

## **2. A12 Project planning**

As you will know the A12 RIS1 scheme falls in the area most affected by the NEGC proposals in Colchester. This project has been collaboratively planned from the start, not least because of the work carried out by Essex County Council on the A120 which would interface with the A12 widening under any of the five options in play. To enable both projects to progress collaboratively there have been:

- Joint consultations on both projects simultaneously
- Joint project meetings
- Joined up technical teams
- Strong community forums often joint and joint forums with senior elected representatives too

Although the Local Plans have been in preparation during the option identification studies to find a preferred route, it has always been stated that the options were compatible with whatever came up in the local plans.

## **3. Wider collaborative planning**

Both Highway authorities have ambitious and forward looking infrastructure work ongoing at the present time, and for this reason it was realised in 2016 that a joint Programme Board approach was necessary, not only to inform each other of the progress of each separate piece of work, but to anticipate issues and plan for these, and wider than this, to explore the future planning horizon to examine how we may work better together.

By way of evidence I attach our memorandum of understanding which shows how we work together. Programme Boards have and continued to meet monthly.

I very much hope in all the above and through the annexes, that we have demonstrated the degree to which we are working together and that this dispels in your mind any thoughts that there was a lack of collaborative approach going on at present. Whilst the statutory process and timetables may not always mesh as we would like them to, it has been incumbent upon us all to look ahead and plan for the future whatever it may bring, and we will continue to do this for the benefit of all in central and north Essex.

Yours sincerely

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