

Our ref:NEGV dpd1
Your ref:

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Dear Sir

Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community Issues and Options Development Plan Document Consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposals for a proposed new community of up to 24,000 homes.

The A12 and the A120 between Braintree and the A12, are nearing capacity, most noticeably at peak times

A12 Trunk Road

The A12 provides the main south-west/north-east route through Essex and Suffolk, connecting Ipswich in the north with London and the M25 in the south. It forms a key part of the Strategic Road Network. It is of national strategic importance linking East Anglia and in particular the ports of the Felixstowe and Harwich to London and the South East. It is also of critical importance regionally and locally to the economic and social wellbeing of the towns and communities it serves.

In December 2014, the Department of Transport published the first Road Investment Strategy covering the Roads Period 2015-2020. It outlined a long-term vision for England's motorways and major roads, and included a multi-year investment plan that is being used to improve the network and create better roads for users.

In particular the Strategy includes:

- A12 Chelmsford to A120 - widening the A12 between junction 19 and junction 25 to three lanes
- developing for the next Road Period
 - A12 Colchester bypass - widening the A12 between junctions 25 and 29 to three lanes
 - A12 M25 to Chelmsford – widening to three lanes between the M25 and the Chelmsford bypass (junctions 11 to 15),

Currently start of works for the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening is programmed for 2020/21. A public consultation was held in Spring 2017 at which four options to upgrade the A12 was presented, the outcomes of which will inform a preferred route announcement expected in spring 2018.

A120 Trunk Road

The A120 is the primary route linking the A10 at Hertford in the West to the port of Harwich in the East, roughly following the original Roman Road corridor, Stane Street. In the 1970's and 1980's road improvements provided bypasses of Bishops Stortford, Great Dunmow and Coggeshall and the line of the A120 around Colchester was diverted to follow the A12 via its upgrades at Stanway and the Colchester Northern Bypass, together with a completely new alignment to Harwich, east of Colchester. Following completion of the dualling of A120 between the M11 at Junction 8 (Stansted) and Braintree in July 2004, the A120 from M11 to the A12 (Junction 25) was added to the trunk road network. The section from the A12 (Junction 29) to Harwich also forms part of the trunk road network.

The upgrading of the A120 between Braintree and the A12 Junction 25 does not feature in the current Road Investment Strategy.

Given the standard (single carriageway passing through semi urban/residential areas) and congestion/capacity issues associated with this corridor, ECC have been undertaking a feasibility study looking at the opportunity for upgrading and dualling this section of the A120. This initiative has been supported by government with a commitment given at the 2015 Autumn Statement for match funding, HE engagement in the process. The study resulted in a public consultation in spring 2017 on five options. The outcomes of the consultation together with the work undertaken provides an evidence base to support the inclusion of dualling of this section of the A120 in a future Road Investment Strategy and has been submitted to DFT for their consideration. Further technical studies and a business case will be submitted this year to further support the proposed dualling

Highways England can confirm that the feasibility study has followed and is fully aligned with its usual product control framework processes for development and delivery of major schemes.

Both of these schemes are recognised within the DPD consultation document. However, it is noted that a different line to that consulted on in the Spring of 2017 is shown on your plans for the A12. If this is to be pursued it will result in the A12 scheme being delayed as the route illustrated has had no assessment work undertaken, it could also have a significant affect upon the cost of the scheme at the moment it is unclear where any shortfall would come from.

We contrast the new alignment for the A12 shown in the consultation document with the statement at a number of places in the North Essex Councils evidence to the

current local plan examination, for example at paragraph 5.1.6 of the evidence on issue 5, which states

“The final boundaries and scale of the Colchester Braintree Borders Garden Community, which will be fixed in a future Development Plan Document (DPD), will have regard to the chosen Option. The garden community can accommodate whichever alignment is chosen.”

We welcome other policies in the plan which support coordinated development of houses, jobs and services including public transport and broadband which will allow working from home thereby reducing demand on existing transport infrastructure. The DPD discusses new junctions on the A12. These would need to be justified by evidence, which we have not yet seen. Any new junction would have to comply fully with current design standards, fit with the future A12 scheme and have an appropriate design life. The policies for safeguarding the routes for an improved A12 and A120 are noted and appreciated.

Given the current conditions both on the A12 and A120, the challenges will be how to get away early development whilst not leading to unacceptable impacts upon the road network and to ensure that a balance of jobs homes and the infrastructure to support them comes forward together as required to minimise transport impacts.

We are committed to work with you to deliver the North Essex Garden Community and keeping the SRN performing its intended function.

Yours Faithfully

Mark Norman