



Mr R. Clews
Planning Inspector
Examination Office
PO Box 12607
Clacton-on-Sea
CO15 9GN

Leader of the Council's Office
Town Hall
Station Road
Clacton-on-Sea
Essex
CO15 1SE

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Tel: (01255) 686007
Email: ollr.nstock@tendringdc.gov.uk

Dear Mr Clews

Strategic Section 1 Local Plan

It is with a huge amount of positivity and optimism that I welcome your return to North Essex in the New Year to resume examination hearings on the Strategic Section 1 Local Plan for Braintree, Colchester and my district of Tendring.

I am writing to you ahead of the examination hearings in my capacity as the Leader of Tendring District Council to lend my wholehearted support to the vision for future long-term growth set out in the emerging Plan and the proposals for three new comprehensively-planned Garden Communities.

We are extremely proud of the collaboration and close partnership working that has enabled us to get this project so well-advanced; not only have the local authorities worked together with a harmony previously unheard between neighbouring district councils, and also with central government to achieve direct treasury funding, but even within my own council, famous for its political differences, we have achieved unanimity of agreement that this plan is the way forward and the most appropriate strategy.

The all-out elections just a few months ago gave us another hung council here in Tendring with eight different political groups. The first vote after the election in May 2019, was so tight it was determined on the casting vote of the outgoing Chairman who had lost his seat! Notwithstanding these huge political differences we voted unanimously in August to agree that the Additional Sustainability Appraisal work, and evidence base (including the additional evidence), supported the existing spatial strategy for growth in the submitted Local Plan proposing three cross-border Garden Communities and that it is justified as being the most appropriate strategy. This was because all 48 elected members recognised that it is the right thing to do and the local plan was the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives, based on proportionate evidence. It is a powerful democratic mandate of which I am extremely proud.

I understand that the programme of hearing sessions will be focussed on ensuring proper scrutiny of the considerable volume of additional evidence prepared in response to your very clear, specific and fairly-constructed criticisms of the Plan as set out in your 2018 letters, along with your helpful advice/guidance as to how to address the concerns raised. I am confident that you will find the additional evidence prepared by Officers and specialist consultants helpful in addressing your

previous concerns and help the North Essex Authorities work towards the formal adoption of the new Plan.

You will also be aware that since you initially wrote to us Government has confirmed spending plans of £100m for the link road between the A133 and A120 and a rapid transit scheme. This announcement demonstrates the key Garden Community principle of “infrastructure before housing” right from the outset. Of course the link road will open up a key economic corridor but it is also significant, as you may be aware, that the original link between these two major roads was started in 1980’s but never completed (the unused bridge and slip road are still standing on the A120) so a long-term “wrong” is being “righted”.

For more than a decade now, Officers and Councillors at Tendring District Council have wrestled with the enormous task of preparing a new Local Plan to provide a framework for delivering sustainable growth to meet future housing needs and to deliver our ambitions for economic growth and prosperity whilst protecting and enhancing our unique historic, rural and coastal environment. Since 2007, my Council has embarked on several painful attempts at putting a new plan in place that achieves an acceptable balance between the demands of government policy, legislative considerations, the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities and other public bodies, the economic ambitions of businesses and residents and the strong fears, within many of our communities, about the impact of major development on the character and enjoyment of the place they live.

Through all the trials and tribulations, we have a Plan that gets the balance right, and which provides certainty for residents and businesses, whilst also considering the potential environmental effects, not only up to 2033 but beyond through the Garden Community proposals. It sets out a positive and ambitious programme of growth for North Essex which is fully in line with government thinking and I strongly encourage you Sir, through your deliberations, to endorse the additional evidence that has been prepared and to find the Strategic Section 1 Local Plan for North Essex sound.

Our stated ambition is to choose the most appropriate strategy from which to plan our communities for the future, seeking to address the housing and infrastructure needs of the district. This is an exciting time as Leader of a Council which has taken absolute ownership of delivering our future community needs.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Neil Stock OBE
Leader of the Council

Cc:

Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of Braintree District Council
Councillor Mark Cory, Leader of Colchester Borough Council
Councillor David Finch, Leader of Essex County Council