

Response to EXD/075 RTS “Vision to Plan” by Neil Gilbranch

This report appears to be a high-level study of Route options, Modes of operation and associated costings and there is a high degree of disagreement about its proposals among people with experience and knowledge in this field. I would like to make a general comment about the final section of the report which suggests that there is no requirement to have a detailed design for the scheme at this stage of the plan.

There can be little doubt among the general public that the NEAs have “committed to” a step change in transport infrastructure as one justification for the Garden Community plan. This has been repeated by councillors and officers and by NEGC Ltd in press releases, at council meetings and in recent public events. It has also been well publicised that The Rapid Transit System (RTS) is the transport concept which will deliver the step change. I also refer to the NEGC Garden Communities Charter June 2016 (see extracts below)

In my opinion, if the GCs are reliant upon and to be planned around the RTS, the latter should be in a sufficiently detailed stage of design at least to establish how the spatial strategy for the GC’s will work in principle.

Furthermore, for the RTS to be able to connect externally (from the GCs) and to remain viable in the long term (without the risk of needing unplanned public funding), it must at least function to a set of minimum standards, most importantly travel cost and journey times, to encourage its use. I cannot understand how this can be demonstrated without detailed design of the space requirements for the buses, including additional land requirements, to guarantee satisfactory segregation or priority movements, without inappropriately compromising other existing modes of transport.

Extracts from the NORTH ESSEX GARDEN COMMUNITIES JUNE 2016 GARDEN COMMUNITIES CHARTER

THEME 1: PLACE AND INTEGRATION

PRINCIPLE 2 - INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

THE GARDEN COMMUNITIES WILL BE PLANNED AROUND A STEP CHANGE IN INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SYSTEM FOR THE NORTH ESSEX AREA, WHICH WILL PUT WALKING, CYCLING AND PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEMS AT THE HEART OF THE DEVELOPMENT, AND BE DELIVERED IN A TIMELY WAY TO SUPPORT THE COMMUNITIES AS THEY GROW.

Section 1. AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO LANDUSE AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT PLANNING

Landuse type, distribution, mix and density will be planned to maximise the opportunity for the provision and use of sustainable transport internally within the Garden Communities and connecting externally to key centres beyond. Neighbourhoods will be planned to ensure that all residents and employees are within a 10min (800m) walk of public transport. Areas of highest density and mixed-use opportunity will be focused in locations of greatest internal and external sustainable transport interchange.