

North Essex Authorities

Matter 7: The spatial strategy for North Essex (policy SP2)

*Main issues: Does the spatial strategy set out in policy SP2 represent the most appropriate strategy, when considered against the reasonable alternatives?
Does policy SP2 adequately and appropriately define the role of each tier in the settlement hierarchy?*

Questions:

- 1) Taking account of the Sustainability Appraisal and other relevant evidence, is the spatial strategy in policy SP2 justified as the most appropriate development strategy for North Essex, when considered against the reasonable alternatives?**

7.1.1 The North Essex Authorities believe that the spatial strategy outlined in Policy SP2 is the most appropriate development strategy when considering the alternatives. In reaching that conclusion they have had regard to the Sustainability Appraisal and the relevant evidence base.

7.1.2 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) (SD/001) assesses alternatives to the same level of detail and to aid the selection of options. Section 2.4.1 (page 19) of Annex C accompanying the Submitted SA Environmental Report (June 2017) (SD/001) sets out the history of the alternatives explored in relation to the Spatial Strategy of Policy SP2, outlining the Spatial Strategy Options explored, the summary of sustainability impacts highlighted in the SA and the reasons for the selection / rejection of the options as specified by the North Essex Authorities. The SA used a range of evidence to inform the appraisal of spatial strategy and other related strategic options. It was also informed by public responses to earlier versions of the development plan and the SA. Additionally the North Essex Authorities have each carried out a SA of the Section 2 Plans, which supports the spatial strategy in policy SP2.

7.1.3 Section 5.5 (page 76) of the SA Environmental Report (2017) (SD/001) provides the full appraisal of Spatial Strategy options for North Essex. Alongside the appraisal of Policy SP2, the following alternatives were explored:

- Alternative 1: focus on allocating all of the explored Garden Community options proposed in the Strategic Area at smaller individual scales
- Alternative 2: The allocation of one Garden Community only
- Alternative 3: The allocation of two Garden Communities only

- Alternative 4: A focus on existing settlements only across the Strategic Area, commensurate to proportionate growth (exploring whether needs can be met without the allocation of Garden Communities).
- Alternative 5: A focus on stimulating infrastructure and investment opportunities across the Strategic Area
- Alternative 6: CAUSE's Metro Plan

7.1.4 The appraisal of Policy SP2 and the above alternatives highlighted significantly positive sustainability effects for all of the options. A number of negative effects were also highlighted for the alternatives that were not assessed as likely within the appraisal of Policy SP2. These are outlined in Section 5.5.4 (pages 81-84) of the SA Environmental report (2017) (SD/001), with the assessment of Policy SP2 in sections 5.5.2 - 5.5.3 (pages 78-79). The SA demonstrates based on the sustainability themes explored, the Spatial Strategy of SP2 is the most appropriate development strategy for North Essex.

7.1.5 Appendix 1 (page 190) of the SA (SD/001) sets out what evidence was used in the assessment of Garden Community and related strategic options. It also explains those assumptions made in the assessment of options in order to create a 'level playing field' in appraising alternatives. More broadly, the SA was informed by those evidence base documents set out in Table 2 of the SA Environmental Report (page 18) (SD/001), and which are explored in more detail in Annex A of the SA, where the findings of these could be used comparatively and fairly in the assessment of all options.

7.1.6 The SA also demonstrates that the Plan's development strategy is the most sustainable option through the consideration and assessment of a number of other related strategic options. These are:

- **'Garden Communities, New Towns or Traditional Approaches to Strategic Scale Growth' (Appendix 1 – page 172)** – this assessed whether the principle of new Garden Communities is more or less sustainable than a 'simpler' new town model and traditional approaches to growth such as urban extensions. The SA identifies that although there are some similarities in sustainability benefits arising from each approach, the Garden Community model represents the most sustainable option. Section 2.4.4 (page 38) of SA Annex C (2017) offers a summary of the sustainability impacts and reason for selection / rejection of each option.
- **Garden Community Options (Appendix 1 – page 193)** – this assessed whether the allocated Garden Communities are the most sustainable options compared to Garden Communities in other submitted locations. It also explored a range of broad scales at each location where identified. The SA demonstrates that on the balance of sustainability themes explored, the

allocated Garden Communities are the most sustainable options explored. Section 2.4.2 (page 25) of SA Annex C (2017) offers a summary of the sustainability impacts and reason for selection / rejection of each option.

- **Alternative (Cumulative) Garden Community Option Permutations (Appendix 1 - page 228)** – this assessed whether the ‘suite’ of allocated Garden Communities is more or less sustainable than other permutations of selected / rejected Garden Community options in combination (note: the comparative ‘Cumulative & Synergistic Impacts of the Allocated Garden Communities’ is presented on page 221). The SA demonstrates that on the balance of sustainability themes explored, the allocation of the 3 Garden Communities is the most sustainable permutation. Section 2.4.3 (page 33) of SA Annex C (2017) offers a summary of the sustainability impacts and reason for selection / rejection of each option.

7.1.7 With regards to other evidence base used to determine the spatial strategy as set out in policy SP2, the Garden Communities Topic Paper (EB/028), particularly from page 11 onwards explains in more detail how this strategy has been determined by each local authority.

2) Why does the spatial strategy include provision, at the proposed garden communities, for substantial development beyond the Section 1 Plan period?

7.2.1 To be effective Local Plans must be deliverable over the plan period. Paragraph 157 requires Local Plans to be drawn up over an appropriate time scale, preferably 15 years, and take account of longer term requirements. Where, as is the case for the Section 1 Plans, an element of the development and infrastructure requirements are to be delivered as part of strategic sites it would be artificial for the end of the Plan period to be treated as an end date for those sites. As a result, it is appropriate for the Plan to recognise the development and evolution of the garden communities beyond the Plan period. The wording of Policy SP2 refers to the *"expectation that substantial additional housing and employment development will be delivered in each community beyond the current Local Plan periods"*, but does not seek to constrain or restrict that development.

3) Does policy SP2 adequately and appropriately define the role of each tier in the settlement hierarchy?

7.3.1 Policy SP2 is not intended to define a settlement hierarchy for the North Essex area. Each local planning authority section 2 Local Plan contains details of a settlement hierarchy and detailed spatial strategy which meets the growth needs of that local authority. This is recognised in paragraph 3 of the policy.

7.3.2 Instead SP2 contains broad principles of the spatial strategy which will be focused on existing settlements depending on their scale, sustainability and existing role, the availability of previously developed land and the garden communities. These broad principles have, together with the assessments in the Sustainability Appraisal (SD/001), informed the locations of the proposed garden communities. These overall principles then continue to be translated locally within the section 2 Local Plans.

7.3.2 The North Essex Authorities consider that the spatial hierarchy is therefore sufficiently covered within the existing wording of SP2 and the section 2 Local Plans.

- 4) Is the detail in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.5 relevant to Section 1 of the Plan? If it is, should it be included in policy SP2?**

7.4.1 Paragraphs 3.3 to 3.5 are set out to provide some context for the section 1 in relation to the spatial strategy at a local authority level. They are not intended to be a detailed description or settlement hierarchy for each local authority area. Policies which include that information are set out within each section 2 Local Plan. As such the North Essex Authorities do not consider it appropriate that this text is added to policy SP2.

- 5) Should paragraph 2 of the policy refer to the need to avoid the coalescence of settlements?**

7.5.1 The North Essex Authorities consider that the first line of this paragraph; *“Future growth will be planned to ensure settlements maintain their distinctive character and role”* is an appropriate way to cover this issue. This covers a wider range of issues including design and physical positioning of new development to retain distinctive character. In many but not all cases this includes preventing the coalescence of one community with another.

- 6) Does the reference to “Garden City principles” in the last paragraph of the policy identify the principles that are intended with sufficient clarity? What is the relationship between these principles and the North Essex Garden Communities Charter (June 2016)?**

7.6.1 The TCPA Garden City Principles provided the starting point for the North Essex Garden Communities Charter (EB007) which updates the principles for the North Essex context. The North Essex Authorities propose changing the reference to the ‘*Garden City Principles*’ in policy SP2 be changed to read ‘*North Essex Garden Communities Charter*’ to be consistent with other references in the document (e.g. Policy SP7, penultimate paragraph).

