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**AN ALTERNATIVE GROWTH
STRATEGY FOR NORTH ESSEX**

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PREFACE

“Wherever something is wrong – something is too big.”

Leopold Kohr

Economist & Political Scientist

“Things work at a scale at which people play a part in the systems that govern their lives. At a larger scale, all systems become oppressive.”

Kevin Campbell

Architect and founder of Urban Initiatives

Introduction

1. **This is an alternative strategy to that forming Section 1 of the North Essex Authorities' Local Plan jointly prepared by Braintree, Colchester and Tendring Councils which was submitted to the Secretary of State and examined in 2018. That Plan is in abeyance following serious deficiencies identified by the Local Plan Inspector centred on the inadequacy of the North Essex Authorities' (NEA) promotion of three large scale Garden Communities (GCs) including a defective Sustainability Appraisal. He has advised that to progress the Local Plan further, all reasonable strategic options should be considered and sustainability appraised.**
2. **This Alternative Growth Strategy is therefore put forward for consideration alongside that promoted by the NEA. It adopts a holistic approach in that, whilst focusing primarily on strategic sites, it also contains a Settlement Classification covering the whole of North Essex which forms a template for determining strategic and non-strategic locations for growth. It is therefore relevant to the separately prepared Section 2 Local Plans which have already been submitted to the Secretary of State but which have yet to be examined.**
3. **Specifically, whilst this Alternative Growth Strategy lends support in principle for strategic sites based on Garden Community principles, it rejects the locations and huge scale of the three GCs being put forward by the NEA.**
4. **This Alternative Growth Strategy is not commissioned by any person or body and the views expressed within this document are entirely my own.**

WHY THE NEA LARGE SCALE GARDEN COMMUNITIES ARE UNACCEPTABLE

5. The settlement pattern in Essex has evolved over the last 2,000 or more years as a series of towns and villages spaced along main highways or country lanes – each settlement with its own hinterland and separated mainly by distances reflecting the daily range of a working horse or farmworker. There is no standard distance for this separation, but most nucleated settlements are about 2 or 3 miles apart – so that Essex towns and villages evolved as free-standing and separate communities across the face of the County. This spacing remains important today because it preserves identity through separateness as well as the countryside setting around each settlement. **The successful retention of this separateness and the protection of the rural settings of settlements in the face of such enormous pressures for development is perhaps the greatest Planning achievement in Essex during the post war period.**

6. The main thrust of post-war Planning has been to secure an efficient use of land whilst meeting the need for housing and growth generally. **This reflects not only the importance of avoiding the profligate use of land in a densely populated country but also the widely-supported aim to protect as much countryside as possible for agriculture, ecology, recreation, amenity and heritage. Those aims are no less important today – indeed they are more important in the face of the current unprecedented scale of development pressures.**
7. **Single developments devouring hundreds of hectares of farmland cannot be readily integrated into the close-knit settlement pattern in Essex without departing from the principles which have governed the gradual evolution of settlements for two or more millennia.** Quite apart from the loss of land to development, the physical, economic and social impacts of large scale GCs will cause a ripple effect on communities over a much wider area. There is no indication as yet that the nature and scale of these forces are understood – with planning vision focused so far on housing numbers and the internal land use and design of GCs rather than on their wider impacts.
8. **It is naïve to think that shoe-horning large-scale GCs into an already close-knit settlement pattern will lead to a more sustainable model for future development. It is more likely to have the opposite effect.** If we take the Colchester-Braintree Borders GC as an example, the plan is to construct a new town of some 70,000 residents within a few miles of Colchester – an historic town of 100,000 – which must inevitably lead to incalculable numbers of cross-movements between the neighbouring towns. They will compete rather than being complementary. People will live in one town and work in the other and their proximity will give rise to the generation of high levels of interchanging movements. The closer the proximity, the greater the likelihood that such movements will escalate. **Any attempt to make Colchester and this GC more self-contained would be futile faced with what would amount to twin towns of similar size, duplicating functions, simply by being too close together.**
9. **The fact is that both the Colchester-Braintree Borders and West of Braintree GCs pay scant regard to the historic settlement pattern.** The effect will be a swathe of urbanised development along the existing line of the A120 from Marks Tey to Stebbing – very different from the current perception of passing through or skirting individual settlements forming ‘beads on a necklace’ along the historic line of Stane Street.
10. **The case for the GCs on the actual scales proposed has not yet been made, nor have reasons been given why they are of different scales. The promotion of the GCs to date has been more attentive to urban design, lifestyles and the quality of the living environment rather than considering impacts and respecting the long held planning principles associated with land economy and minimising the loss of countryside.**
11. Designing settlements from scratch – especially where there is great emphasis on open space and amenity – makes greater demands on the countryside than expanding existing

settlements. **Whilst this does not mean that GCs should be rejected out of hand as a means for delivering future housing and jobs, (and as already noted, they are not), they must nevertheless be of a form and scale which respects the existing settlement pattern and the integrity and functions of existing settlements. This can best be achieved by creating Garden Villages rather than what are in all but name – Large New Towns.**

12. There are normally sensible, defensible boundaries to define and sometimes confine the limits to growth. Arbitrary and amorphous blobs on diagrams show a blatant disregard for such defensible boundaries - reminiscent of the First World War adage: *“Large Hands – Small Maps - That’s the way to Kill the Chaps!”* The message here is that there is a duty to provide a measure of precision when drawing development boundaries - or at least to demonstrate that growth is being distributed in line with a sound pre-conceived strategy – in order to limit Planning Blight. The already chequered history of GCs has caused great difficulties and deep concerns for directly and indirectly affected residents over a wide area of North Essex - especially for those seeking to sell a house. It has been known since the publication of the NPPF in March 2012 that new Local Plans are required. The positively glacial progress to reach where we are today has led to prolonged uncertainty which regrettably will continue to be a source of serious Planning Blight for some time to come. Feeding these human considerations into the mix, the continuing pursuit of large scale and over-ambitious GCs cannot be justified if there are equally or more sustainable and deliverable alternative strategies available.
13. The historic town of Colchester has grown for more than 2,000 years and has not seriously encroached beyond its two delightful peripheral valleys – the Roman River to the south and Salary Brook to the east. The proposition is now that this should be cast aside in the case of Salary Brook and that development in the form of a Colchester-Tendring Borders GC should extend beyond this existing soft urban edge and encroach into the flat farmlands of western Tendring. This would represent a major departure to the containment of Colchester within existing physical features – be they natural or man-made. **Allowing development to leap-frog over these boundaries – and the man-made boundary of the A12 bypass to the north can be included in this – should only be allowed if such encroachment on the setting of Colchester is unavoidable.**
14. Having raised fundamental concerns that large scale GCs unacceptably depart from the natural evolution of the settlement pattern and, more recently, the principles that govern its planned evolution, and also having criticised the scale of location of the three GCs schemes in question, this leads me to consider what guiding principles should be identified to shape our thinking about the best way of handling the challenging scales of future development in North Essex.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

15. Vision Sections in Development Plans normally appear as a utopian list of aspirations envisaging that Planning will deliver a sustainable and economically bright and harmonious future with everyone leading a more healthy, wealthy, idyllic and sustainable lifestyle. These Visions imply that the planning system is able to closely control and influence future development so that it delivers what is regarded as sustainable development – thereby making less demands on the planet. This notion, however laudable, ignores the rather important fact that proposed development within a single Plan period represents only a fraction of the already existing man-made built environment - much of which would probably not qualify as sustainable development if planned or built today. There is also the question of the insufficient supply of new housing in the past to meet the needs arising from a growing but ageing population. Sustainable development must therefore address past unmet housing needs especially for affordable and special needs housing. This leads to my First Guiding Principle:-

GP1 : In planning for future sustainable development, radical measures will be necessary to make existing development more sustainable – giving high priority to currently unmet housing needs especially for affordable and special needs housing.

16. By raising the question of how existing development can be made more sustainable, one can envisage a myriad of different ways in which existing development is unsustainable - but there are three specific and related areas which, if positively addressed, would make an enormous contribution in moving towards making settlements more-self-contained and hence more sustainable. These are:

- *Reducing the need to travel by private modes of transport*
- *Reducing the distance between work, school, shops and community facilities; and*
- *Increasing accessibility to and use of public transport, footpaths and cycleways.*

17. Tackling the above, especially promoting employment alongside new housing, would help redress the huge reliance on commuting and travel by private transport (nowhere more true than in Essex), and, by providing realistic sustainable travel alternatives, help to reduce the distance between home on the one hand and work and community facilities on the other. Delivering homes and employment in close proximity will, in particular, help reduce motorised journeys and in so doing, help make each area more self-contained. This leads to my Second Guiding Principle:-

GP2 : In order to reduce the need to travel as well as reducing the length of journeys, the primary aim of a Development Plan should be to make the whole of the Plan area and each individual settlement within it as self-contained as possible.

18. The next issue relates to the identity of settlements. As noted in the Introduction, one of the principal achievements of the post-war planning system is that despite unprecedented scales of development, settlements have for the most part remained free-standing and surrounded by countryside. This physical separation has helped settlements to retain their identity and sense of place and is the building block for the creation (and retention) of successful communities. This leads to my Third Guiding Principle:-

GP3 : In order to promote successful communities and protect the identity of every settlement, future development should avoid coalescence and unnecessary sprawl and should be located where it retains the separation and sense of place of existing settlements.

19. The next matter is that of scale. Development must on the one hand deliver new and improved community facilities but on the other be proportionate and human in scale. These sometimes conflicting aims need to be carefully weighed having regard to Village and the Neighbourhood Planning Principles which provide good templates for future development. This leads to my Fourth Guiding Principle:-

GP4 : The scale of growth should not only ensure the delivery or improvement of community services and facilities for existing and future residents but also reflect the need to create communities that are human in scale and influenced by Neighbourhood and Village Planning Principles.

20. Boundaries are important in planning terms – defining administrative areas, allocations, and policy areas. They may be arbitrary - but they may also be informed by man-made or natural physical features which serve as logical defining and defensible boundaries. Thus rivers, streams, hedges, roads and tracks often define the extent of growth or the operational areas of particular policies. In some cases, larger physical features such as valleys and issues of inter-visibility and visual impact are primary factors in defining boundaries especially when safeguarding landscape and other rural resources. Where this applies, high priority should be afforded the protection of the landscape and only essential development should be permitted. This leads to my Fifth Guiding Principle:-

GP5 : Planning boundaries should wherever possible follow natural or man-made physical features and, on the interface between settlements and the countryside, the protection of rural resources should be paramount unless an essential need is demonstrated.

21. It is important that the scale of growth is commensurate with the size of settlements and also takes account of both opportunities and constraints. For every settlement earmarked

for strategic or non-strategic growth, both the scale and the location of such growth should be the subject of consultation between the plan-makers and the planned. If there are alternative growth options, these should also be the subject of active consultation. Such consultation will enable the Councils to justify the sustainability of their overall strategy and to make the case for each settlement to contribute to varying degrees in delivering houses and jobs. This leads to my Sixth and Final Guiding Principle:-

GP6 : The scale, location and options for growth should be the subject of local consultation concerning the level of contribution each settlement can reasonably be expected to make to the housing and employment requirements of North Essex.

22. These 6 Guiding Principles can be translated into the following concise Planning Aims:-

PLANNING AIMS

PA1: Ensure that future growth is sustainable but also contributes to making existing development more sustainable whilst giving priority to the backlog of housing needs especially for affordable housing.

PA2 : Promote measures to make the Plan area and every settlement within it more self-contained by reducing the need to travel and by boosting the use of public transport and non-motorised modes of travel.

PA3 : Maintain (or retain) the identity of settlements and foster community spirit by avoiding sprawl and coalescence.

PA4 : Ensure growth not only secures the necessary community infrastructure but also is human in scale and influenced by Neighbourhood and Village Planning Principles.

PA5 : Follow natural and man-made boundaries to accommodate and confine growth whilst safeguarding the countryside as far as possible; and

PA6 : Consult at the local level in order to justify the options, scale and location for growth for each settlement as part of the Plan-making process.

The above Guiding Principles and Planning Aims should be adhered to as closely as possible in formulating a future growth strategy for North Essex and inform an Overarching Strategy.

OVERARCHING STRATEGY

23. The Overarching Strategy is underpinned by the above Guiding Principles and Planning Aims. Making North Essex as a whole and all its settlements more self-contained whilst reducing reliance on private modes of travel is key.

24. The identification of strategic and non-strategic sites should therefore be strongly influenced by available opportunities to direct growth towards existing settlements and to locations which enable greater use of public transport or exploit potential for new public transport infrastructure and services.

25. This Alternative Growth Strategy therefore seeks to deliver North Essex's housing and other land use requirements in a sustainable way whilst dispensing with the need for Large Scale GCs which transgress or depart from most if not all of the above Guiding Principles and Planning Aims.

26. For the purposes of this Alternative Growth Strategy, “strategic growth” is defined as new *single* housing sites with a capacity of 300 or more dwellings and “non-strategic growth” as all other new housing sites with a capacity of under 300 dwellings.

SETTLEMENT CLASSIFICATION

27. The following Settlement Classification relates to the whole of North Essex and is also depicted in the accompanying Key Diagram. Growth to varying scales is proposed in:-

- a) Large Towns*
- b) Medium-sized Towns**
- c) Small Towns***
- d) Key Satellite Villages closest to Large Towns
- e) Primary Transport Corridor Villages
- f) Garden Villages not exceeding 3,000 dwellings
- g) Other Villages****

* Towns with a population of over 40,000

** Towns with a population of 15-40,000

*** Towns with a population of under 15,000

**** Villages other than those classified in d), e) and f) above.

Large Towns

Large Towns continue to be the main foci for strategic growth as they offer higher level services, greater employment opportunities, and better internal and external transport links. The following are defined as Large Towns:-

- Braintree (including Bocking and Great Notley)
- Clacton-on-Sea (including Great Clacton and Holland-on-Sea)
- Colchester (including Stanway)

Medium-sized Towns

Medium-sized Towns offer potential for lower levels of strategic growth having regard to their good internal and external transport links but more limited range and scale of higher tier services and employment.

The following are defined as Medium-sized Towns:-

- **Frinton & Walton (including Kirby Cross)**
- **Harwich (including Dovercourt and Parkeston)**
- **Witham**

Small Towns

Small Towns offer a wide range of local services, including for the most part Secondary Schools, and have potential for non-strategic growth. The following are defined as Small Towns:-

- **Brightlingsea**
- **Coggeshall**
- **Halstead**
- **Manningtree (including Lawford and Mistley)**
- **Tiptree+**
- **West Mersea**
- **Wivenhoe**

+Tiptree is a large village but functions as a Small Town.

Key Satellite Villages closest to the Large Towns

28. The free-standing settlements which lie closest to the urban edge of the three Large Towns are defined as Key Satellite Villages (KSVs) and offer substantial potential for the delivery of sustainable growth, either individually or cumulatively, especially where they are situated alongside main radial roads and have railway stations. The ability to provide new short haul rapid transit bus links between KSVs and Large Towns is also a vital means of securing modal shift from private to public modes of transport. In every case, however, growth must avoid coalescence.

29. This Alternative Growth Strategy therefore proposes 7 KSVs around Braintree, 12 around Colchester, and 4 around Clacton. Focusing non-urban growth within these 23 KSVs will form 3 mini-conurbations with the Large Towns at the centre and connecting the KSVs to higher tier services principally by improved bus services. The proximity of the KSVs to the Large Towns will also foster the provision of footpath and cycleway links into the Large Towns and between the KSVs. Indeed, investing in localised public and non-motorised transport services and infrastructure is considered far more cost-effective and deliverable than the long distance mass transit requirements associated with the large scale GCs.

30. Cumulatively, growth directed towards the KSVs would contribute a significant proportion of overall growth requirements. Some KSVs will be capable of delivering strategic growth whilst others only non-strategic growth – the ultimate scale of growth in each case being dependent on local opportunities and constraints.
31. KSVs closest to the Large Towns therefore offer potential for growth to varying degrees of scale. The following are defined as KSVs:-

Key Satellite Villages closest to Braintree

- **Bradwell,**
- **Cressing Tye*+**
- **Black Notley*+**
- **High Garrett**
- **Panfield**
- **Rayne**
- **Stisted**

Key Satellite Villages closest to Colchester

- **Abberton & Langenhoe**
- **Ardleigh**
- **Alresford***
- **Birch**
- **Boxted**
- **Copford**
- **Eight Ash Green**
- **Elmstead Market**
- **Great Horkesley (Horkesley Heath)**
- **Langham**
- **Layer de la Haye**
- **Rowhedge**
- **West Bergholt**

Key Satellite Villages closest to Clacton

- **Great Holland**
- **Jaywick**
- **Little Clacton**
- **St. Osyth**

- * Settlements with a local railway station.
- + Crossing Tye and Black Notley are jointly served by Crossing Station.

Primary Transport Corridor Villages

32. The Primary Transport Corridors (PTCs) crossing North Essex offer considerable potential for growth outside the various Towns especially where settlements have a railway station. PTCs present numerous opportunities for promoting growth via linked communities with potential for increased use of public transport. However, whether road or rail, there are currently capacity issues within the system which may determine the scale of growth that can be absorbed within PTCs as well as influencing the timing of this growth in relation to programmed infrastructure improvements. Conversely, there are elements of the rail network which are operating significantly below capacity.

33. It is not advocated that all PTC Villages (PCTVs) are automatically suitable for growth. However, opportunities for both strategic and non-strategic growth should be explored within each PTCVs to identify where growth can be assimilated having regard to economic, social and environmental considerations – especially if such growth can help make an existing village or cluster of villages more sustainable.

34. Three PTCs are identified below within which the PTCVs are defined in the Settlement Classification:-

- **The A12 Trunk Road & Mainline Rail PTC**
- **The A120 Trunk Road PTC; and**
- **The Colchester-Clacton/Frinton & Walton Rail PTC**

The A12 Trunk Road & Mainline Rail PTC

- **Hatfield Peverel***
- **Kelvedon & Feering***
- **Marks Tey***
- **Eight Ash Green (KSV)**
- **Langham (KSV)**

The A120 Trunk Road PTC

- **Rayne (KSV)**

- **Marks Tey***
- **Frating/Hare Green**
- **Wix**
- **Ramsey**

The Colchester - Clacton/Frinton & Walton Rail PTC

- **Alresford* (KSV)**
- **Thorrington****
- **Great Bentley***
- **Weeley***
- **Thorpe-le-Soken***

* Settlements with a local railway station

** Settlement with a proposed railway station

(KSV) = Settlement also classified as a Key Satellite Village.

35. These three PTCs present numerous opportunities for promoting growth via linked communities with potential for increased use of public transport. Particular focus should be given to Primary Transport Corridor Villages (PTCVs) which are also Key Satellite Villages to the Large Towns. Certain opportunities for promoting growth within PTCVs have been identified and are elaborated shortly under “Proposals”.

Garden Villages

36. Some of the many problems which beset large scale GCs can be resolved more readily with Garden Villages - not least the much-reduced level of up-front infrastructure costs before houses and other buildings deliver a return on investment. But there are other benefits as well: as part of a composite strategy, their reduced scale will make far less demands on Essex’s fertile farmland and make it easier to avoid urban sprawl and coalescence - thereby helping keep existing settlements free-standing. They would also be of a size that can be delivered during the Plan period.

37. The proposed scale of Garden Villages, namely that they should not exceed 3,000 dwellings, reflects a need to maintain a human scale whilst at the same time being sufficiently large to aid deliverability and the provision of community infrastructure. Garden Villages within the range of 2-3,000 dwellings could require and deliver a secondary school. However, the exact scale of the proposed Garden Villages will reflect the physical, economic and social opportunities presented by potential sites as well as any constraints to growth.

38. Two specific opportunities for strategic growth in the form of Garden Villages are defined in the Settlement Classification:-

- **Gosfield Airfield Garden Village**
- **Tendring Central Garden Village**

Other Villages

39. “Other Villages” are defined as those villages which are neither listed in the Settlement Classification as either Key Satellite Villages closest to Large Towns, Settlements within Primary Road & Rail Corridors, or Garden Villages. Such villages – which constitute the majority of villages - are not individually defined in the Classification but will nevertheless offer small scale opportunities for village housing and rural employment.

40. The overall aim should be to secure a level of growth that will assist the sustainability of Other Villages via the provision of affordable homes and via small scale windfall sites, securing additional community facilities, or otherwise allowing appropriate development that will materially help retain existing facilities and services or assist the rural economy.

PROPOSALS

41. The Key Diagram depicts graphically the Settlement Classification for North Essex and hence the locations and proposals for growth which are elaborated below. The Alternative Growth Strategy, as noted, maintains the focus for strategic growth to be delivered in the Large and Medium-sized Towns with non-strategic growth in the Small Towns. This is broadly in line with the NEA strategy. Additionally, however, the Settlement Classification identifies opportunities for strategic and non-strategic growth outside the urban areas : in Key Satellite Villages closest to Large Towns, in Primary Transport Corridor Villages, and in Garden Villages not exceeding 3,000 dwellings. It is these three elements of the Alternative Growth Strategy which deviate from the NEA strategy and address the provision earmarked for the large scale GCs during the plan period ie: 7,500 dwellings. The provision in the Alternative Growth Strategy for non-strategic growth in the Small Towns and Other Villages is, however, akin to the NEA strategy, although Other Villages which constitute the majority of villages could well experience lower levels of growth than would otherwise be the case.

42. Finally, whilst the NEA strategy commits major provision to meet the needs of the post-2033 period, it is considered that the framework provided within this Alternative Growth Strategy is sufficiently sound, flexible and forward-looking to represent a suitable framework for the longer term future.

Large Towns

43. Large Towns are sustainable locations for strategic and non-strategic growth, the former envisaged as taking the form of urban extensions or otherwise consolidating the existing urban form where such opportunities exist. Urban extensions can be developed by applying Garden Community design principles and to create sustainable new neighbourhoods. Large Towns also contain a reservoir of smaller sites and opportunities for re-using previously developed land.

Medium-sized Towns

44. Medium-sized Towns also have the potential to deliver strategic and non-strategic growth – but the number and scale of any strategic sites will be much less than for Large Towns. Any strategic sites can also take the form of urban extensions with opportunities to apply Garden Community design principles to create sustainable new neighbourhoods. Medium-sized Towns can also deliver non-strategic growth including infilling and rounding-off sites and make a significant contribution to future housing needs as well as the re-use of previously developed land.

Small Towns

45. Small Towns have potential for non-strategic growth. In view of the different sizes of the Small Towns, the amount of non-strategic growth for each settlement will vary considerably but should not be disproportional to the size of the town. Whilst smaller scale urban extensions may be permissible, the main focus should be on infilling and rounding-off and the re-use of previously developed land.

Key Satellite Villages closest to Large Towns

46. Whilst growth within the KSVs will reflect the considerations and variations referred to in paragraph 29 above, three particular opportunities for growth in KSVs are identified, namely at Eight Ash Green, High Garrett and Langham:-

Eight Ash Green KSV

47. The village of Eight Ash Green lies close to the A12 and is fragmented in form – comprising two detached agglomerations along the A1124 Colchester- Halstead road. It is classified as a KSV as it lies close to the urban edge of Colchester and Stanway and is separated by a narrow gap of undeveloped land which should be retained to avoid coalescence.

48. There is considerable potential for new housing to create a nucleated village with an emphasis on Garden Village principles by developing land principally to the west and south of the village. There is also an opportunity to create a village centre which is absent at present as well as an attractive open space corridor through the village linking Fordham Heath with Seven Star Green.
49. The expanded village would be served by improved bus services along the A1124 between Colchester and Halstead.
50. Eight Ash Green will be governed in due course by a Neighbourhood Plan which is at an advanced stage of preparation. The promotion of any additional growth here would need to be the subject of close consultation to reflect Guiding Principle 6 and Planning Aim 6.

High Garrett KSV

51. High Garrett is classified as a KSV as it lies close to the northern edge of Braintree from which it is separated by a narrow wedge of land which must remain undeveloped to avoid coalescence. It also sits astride the A131 Braintree – Sudbury Road.
52. There is some scope for new village housing to the more sensitive west on the edge of the Pant Valley but less constrained land lies to the east of the A131 and an extensive area here could be developed applying Garden Village principles around a new village centre.
53. The expanded village of High Garrett would form a “bead on a necklace” on the routes between Braintree – Halstead – Sudbury and Braintree - Sible Hedingham – Haverhill – routes which diverge at the northern end of the village. Growth would be associated with improved bus services between these centres.

Langham KSV

54. Langham is classified as a KSV due to its close proximity to the northern edge of Colchester and its strategic location in relation to the A12 and A120 trunk roads. It also lies within the A12 Trunk Road and Mainline Rail PTC and enjoys the benefit of omnidirectional access to the A12.
55. The location of growth now being put forward differs substantially from the much larger scale Langham Garden Community scheme promoted previously which included extensive areas of the former Boxted Airfield site to the south of Park Lane. A wide undeveloped green wedge would be retained to separate the village from the A12 and growth would be confined to land north of Park Lane, east of Moor Road, south of School Road and Perry Road, and west of the A12. This confined area could be developed applying Garden Village principles around a new village centre.

56. Langham has a primary school, public house, a village hall with a community-run shop, adjoining playing fields, and local employment sites at School Farm Buildings and Lodge Lane Business Centre which is to be expanded. New village housing would also be close to the main Colchester Business Park and Industrial Estate. There are also opportunities to promote transport-related service industry alongside the northbound carriageway of the A12, whilst the site can be served by fast interurban bus services between Colchester and Ipswich.

Primary Transport Corridor Villages

57. As indicated in paragraph 32 above, not all Primary Transport Corridor Villages (PTCVs) will be suitable for major growth but specific opportunities for growth have been identified in the following four locations:-

Marks Tey PTCV

58. Marks Tey is being promoted by the North Essex Authorities as the focus for a new large-scale Garden Community (the Colchester- Braintree Borders GC also referred to as West Tey) and envisaged to deliver up to 24,000 dwellings. In addition to serious conflict with the above Guiding Principles and Planning Aims, development on this scale will give rise to irresolvable problems associated with funding and the timing of infrastructure – including an essential mass transit system.

59. However, the nodality of Marks Tey on the A12 and A120 trunk roads and its mainline and branch line station cannot be disputed and hence there is clearly potential for growth at this point where two PTCs intersect. There are also many constraints – the timeframe for A12 improvements and the A120 realignment, the capacity of the road and rail systems, and the high quality of the farmland around Marks Tey. That said, growth in the second half of the Plan period would seem to be achievable following completion of the proposed A12 and A120 improvements especially the re-routing of the A120 to a junction with the A12 to the south of Kelvedon.- at which time opportunities to expand Marks Tey could open up.

60. The appropriate scale of such growth can be determined when the implications and timing of planned highway (and hopefully rail improvements as well) are known.

Thorrington PTCV

61. Growth at Thorrington would take the form of a “bead on a necklace” within the Colchester - Clacton/Frinton & Walton Rail PTC and is compatible with the Metro Plan (qv) and a nearby new Garden Village known as Tendring Central (qv) – both of which are discussed below.

62. The expansion of Thorrington would help fund a new village railway station on undeveloped land west of the level crossing on Station Road, so-named after the former station which closed in the 1960's and which lay immediately east of the level crossing. This proposed new station would not only serve Thorrington and Tendring Central Garden Village but also the Small Town of Brightlingsea – reducing the distance to a station for rail commuters and other rail users who currently have to travel to Alresford, Wivenhoe or Colchester stations.
63. This strategic development could be promoted on Garden Village lines and would be associated with improvements to the B1029 between Thorrington and the A133 at Frating.

Metro Plan PTCVs

64. The Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex (CAUSE) advocate growth along the Colchester - Clacton rail corridor as an alternative to large-scale Garden Communities and this concept fits well with the Colchester- Clacton/Frinton & Walton PTC. Four of the 5 villages in this PTC have existing underused stations, namely Alresford, Great Bentley, Weeley and Thorpe-le-Soken, whilst as noted above, a new station is proposed at Thorrington. There is also an underused station at Kirby Cross to serve the western suburbs of the Medium-sized Town of Frinton & Walton.
65. There is considerable spare capacity along this rail line – indeed, an hourly service on this electrified line represents a greatly underused resource. Appropriate levels of growth taking account of both local opportunities and constraints can be distributed as “beads on a necklace” along this route. Provision of new housing and employment in Metro Plan Villages will help these settlements to become more self-contained whilst having easy access to public transport.

Rayne PTCV

66. Rayne lies within the A120 Trunk Road PTC and is also a KSV just to the west of Braintree. In addition to local employment, growth at Rayne will be accessible to employment in nearby Braintree to the east and at Stansted Airport to the west.
67. In order to retain a gap between the edge of Braintree and Rayne, development should be avoided along the eastern edge of the village.
68. Improved interurban bus services between Braintree and Stansted Airport – in fact along the entire length of the A120 Trunk Road PTC – can be routed to serve growth at Rayne.

Garden Villages

69. Two new Garden Villages - new settlements of up to 3,000 dwellings - are included in the Settlement Classification, are based on existing rural employment hubs, and can be delivered during the Plan period. The chosen sites are at Gosfield Airfield and Frating/Hare Green (Tendring Central) :-

Gosfield Airfield Garden Village

70. This former wartime airfield lies to the west of the A1017 between Gosfield and Sible Hedingham. The village of Gosfield lies a little way to the south whilst Sible Hedingham lies two miles to the north with the Small Town of Halstead two miles to the east. Parts of the old airfield have been developed in recent years as an important employment hub. There is scope to expand this employment hub to provide increased job opportunities for future residents and those living in nearby Halstead or further afield in the rural northern parts of Braintree District. This extensive site offers potential to create a Garden Village forming a “bead on a necklace” between Braintree and Haverhill.

71. In part due to its former use, many of the old runways and aprons being still in place, and also its lack of visibility from the A1017 as a result of established structural landscaping, the site is able to absorb development without material harm to the landscape or other rural resources.

72. The site is well-placed to benefit from improved bus services along the A1017 as well as linking to Halstead.

73. The first stage of this proposed Garden Village would deliver some 1,000 dwellings during the Plan period with scope to extend within the perimeter of the old airfield post-2033.

Tendring Central Garden Village

74. Land at Frating/Hare Green north of the A133, south of the A120 and east of the B1029 is situated at a nodal point where the eastward routes to Clacton and Harwich diverge. The site is therefore strategically placed within the existing trunk and main road framework. It is already an important employment hub with TSB, Manheim and other established enterprises north of the A133 and, with a near motorway standard highway westwards via the A120 to the A12, is a prime location for future employment growth.

75. The formation of a major employment hub in the heart of the Tendring peninsula would provide a huge stimulus to the local economy and help intercept the daily westward flow of commuters to Colchester and beyond. Tendring Central is an environmentally preferable alternative to the Colchester -Tendring Borders Garden Community and would

avoid the outward expansion of Colchester beyond the Salary Brook valley and its harmful encroachment onto the Tendring plateau.

76. The Tendring Central Garden Village will help promote a new omni-directional interchange at Hare Green - there currently being no easy eastbound link between the A133 and A120.

77. With regard to public transport, the site has the potential to be served by frequent interurban bus services between Colchester and the Coastal Towns. Although lacking an on-site railway station, the proposed new station at nearby Thorrington would be easily accessible along an improved B1029 with shuttle bus services operating between Tendring Central and Brightlingsea.

78. The first phase of this Garden Village could be promoted for some 2-3,000 dwellings with scope for longer term expansion to the west of the B1029.

Other Villages

79. Other Villages constitute the majority of villages and will, as noted in paragraph 39, provide for a modest level of growth to assist with the sustainability of these settlements. Such development will normally take the form of small scale affordable housing, windfall sites, and development that will either secure or improve existing village facilities and services or assist the rural economy.

Conclusion

80. **This Alternative Growth Strategy provides a framework for determining the location for future strategic and non-strategic growth throughout North Essex.**

81. **The main elements of this Alternative Growth Strategy for North Essex are, in summary, as follows:-**

- **Focusing strategic growth largely in the form of urban extensions in the three Large Towns and, to a lesser extent, in the three Medium-sized Towns.**
- **Directing appropriate levels of growth towards defined Key Satellite Villages surrounding or in the vicinity of the Large Towns to form three mini-conurbations - with each Village closely linked to its nearby Large Town by improved public transport.**
- **Limiting the scale of growth of the seven Small Towns to non-strategic growth.**

- **Expanding defined villages lying within three Primary Transport Corridors especially where served by road and rail – with emphasis on the Rail Corridor between Colchester and Clacton, Frinton and Walton.**
- **Developing two new Garden Villages on the western and eastern sides of North Essex based on existing rural employment hubs at Gosfield Airfield and Frating/Hare Green (Tendring Central).**
- **Enabling modest levels of growth in Other Villages where development would support the local economy and help retain or improve rural facilities and services; and**
- **Affording continuing protection for the countryside and maintaining the separation of settlements.**

82. As a Strategy, it does not attempt to define comprehensive allocations and development boundaries or the precise quantum and distribution of growth. Instead, it focuses on a set of Guiding Principles which should be adhered to in order to direct and control growth. These Guiding Principles form the basis for defining Planning Aims which are in turn reflected in a Settlement Classification for the whole of North Essex. This Classification forms the basis for selecting the location and scale of growth for each settlement as part of an evolutionary process respecting the existing settlement pattern and the countryside.

83. It is that respect for the existing settlement pattern and the countryside that holds the key to the future and affords the best prospect for delivering sustainable development.

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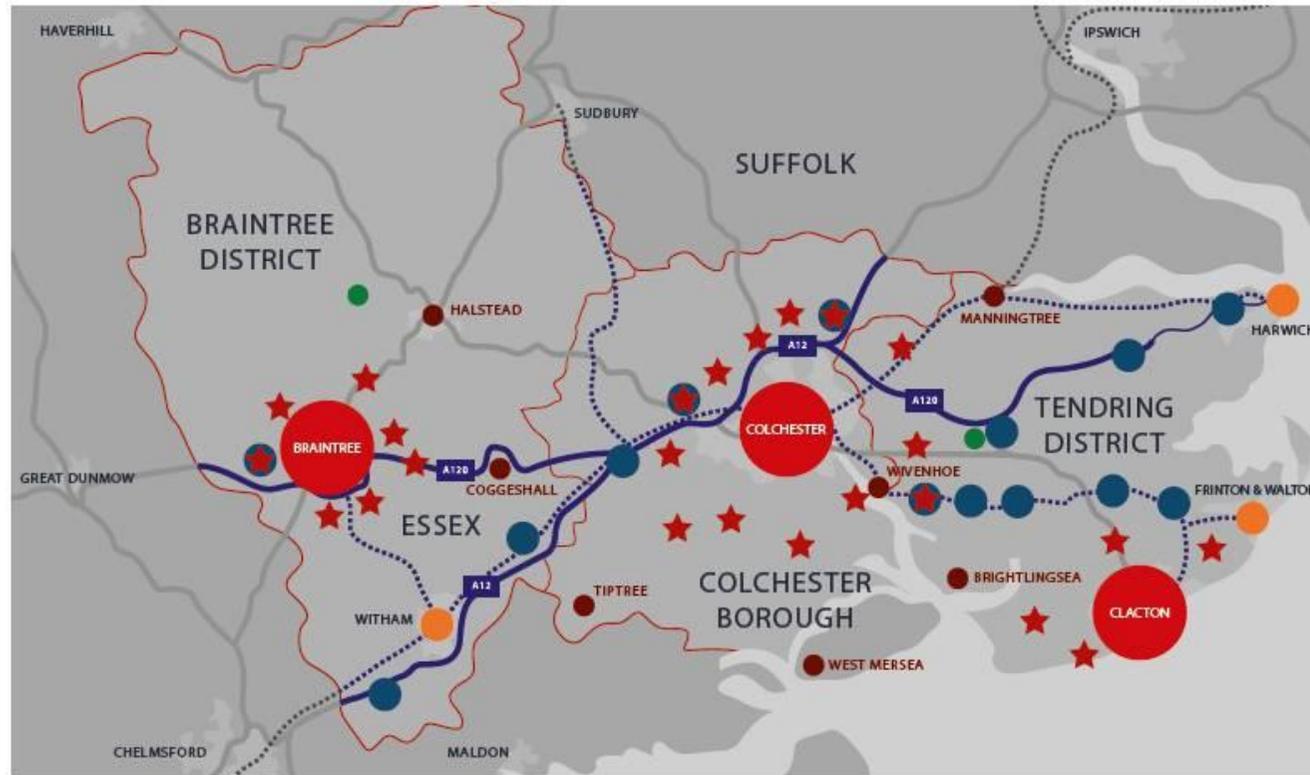
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AN ALTERNATIVE GROWTH STRATEGY FOR NORTH ESSEX



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- LARGE TOWNS
- MEDIUM-SIZED TOWNS
- SMALL TOWNS
- ★ KEY SATELLITE VILLAGES CLOSEST TO LARGE TOWNS
- PRIMARY TRANSPORT CORRIDOR VILLAGES
- GARDEN VILLAGES
- RAIL
- ROAD
- NORTH ESSEX AND DISTRICT COUNCIL BOUNDARIES

SETTLEMENT CLASSIFICATION

- Large Towns (with a population of 40,000 +)
- Medium-sized Towns (with a population of 15 – 40,000)
- Small Towns (with a population of under 15,000)
- ★ Key Satellite Villages closest to Large Towns
- Primary Transport Corridor Villages
- Garden Villages not exceeding 3,000 dwellings.

● Large Towns

- Braintree (including Bocking and Great Notley)
- Clacton-on-Sea (including Great Clacton and Holland-on-Sea)
- Colchester (including Stanway)

● Medium-sized Towns

- Frinton & Walton (including Kirby Cross)
- Harwich (including Dovercourt and Parkeston)
- Witham

KSVs closest to Clacton-on-Sea –

- Great Holland
- Little Clacton
- Jaywick
- St.Osyth

KSVs closest to Colchester –

- Abberton & Langenhoe
- Ardleigh
- Alresford*
- Birch
- Boxted
- Copford
- Eight Ash Green
- Elmstead Market
- Gt. Horkesley (Horkesley Heath)
- Langham
- Layer de la Haye
- Rowhedge
- West Bergholt

* KSVs with a local railway station.

† Cressing Tye and Black Notley are jointly served by Cressing Station.

● Primary Transport Corridor Villages

The A12 Trunk Road and Mainline Rail PTC –

- Hatfield Peverel*
- Eight Ash Green (also a KSV)
- Kelvedon & Feering*
- Langham (also a KSV)
- Marks Tey*

● **Small Towns**

- Brightlingsea
- West Mersea
- Coggeshall
- Wivenhoe
- Halstead
- Tiptree†
- Manningtree (including Lawford and Mistley)

† Tiptree is a large village but functions as a small town.

★ **Key Satellite Villages closest to the Large Towns**

KSVs closest to Braintree –

- Bradwell
- Panfield
- Cressing Tye**†
- Rayne
- Black Notley**†
- Stisted

The A120 Trunk Road PTC –

- Rayne (also a KSV)
- Wix
- Marks Tey*
- Ramsey
- Frating/Hare Green

The Colchester- Clacton/Frinton & Walton Rail PTC –

- Alresford* (also a KSV)
- Weeley*
- Thorrington**
- Thorpe-le-Soken*
- Great Bentley*

* Settlements with a local railway station. ** Settlements with a proposed railway station. (KSV) = Settlement also classified as a Key Satellite Village.

● **Garden Villages**

- Gosfield Airfield Garden Village
- Tendring Central Garden Village