



Local Plan issues for Colchester's new Council March 2016

The new Colchester Borough Council cabinet needs to hit the ground running immediately after the 5 May election. A vital "preferred options" document is due for publication in June indicating some key decisions, including the location of a new town the size of Witham.

If handled wrongly we will have a disaster. Large areas pencilled in will suffer planning blight – residents will be unable to sell their homes. At the same time farm land values will be driven up leaving less funding available for infrastructure. Vital long term decisions will be made without

- strategic vision for generating high value local jobs¹
- planning of infrastructure first²
- listening³ to local people⁴

The planning process has clearly lost touch with local people. Councillors need to insist on a plan based on a vision for growth that the community can understand and support. Four vital things need to be done immediately after 5th May:

1. Get a grip of the Local Plan process:

- Postpone the local plan by 9 months, until the route of A12/A120 is known⁵.
- Use the 9 months to do four key pieces of work:
 - work with neighbouring Councils to produce a visionary (as opposed to technical) plan for North Essex based around the University and Stansted;
 - explore Nicholas Falk's⁶ "pearls" concept, advised by Garden City Developments⁷;
 - re-examine Colchester's housing demand forecasts⁸;
 - use transport consultants to develop a transport plan for Colchester itself.⁹
- If the process can't be delayed, drop West Tey¹⁰ from this 15 year plan completely

2. Show leadership and build consensus:

- Support MPs with more forceful local advocacy for infrastructure funding from central government bodies;
- Support the A12/A120 consultation scheduled for November 2016;
- Work with bus companies to produce clear, co-ordinated timetables in sync with trains¹¹;
- Involve local people in a united vision for the future of North Essex¹²

3. Improve the local plan - Infrastructure First:

- Build for the local economy, not for London
- Spend New Homes Bonus on Infrastructure not current spending
- Set a high Community Infrastructure Levy¹³, with rebates for sites on a brownfield register¹⁴.
- Include a station at the University and develop a plan to improve the rail service¹⁵ on the Colchester / Clacton line in support of transit orientated development.
- Include the A120/A133 link road near Elmstead Market in the plan

4. Drop plans for a new town at West Tey. It's the wrong place because:

- It will become a dormitory for London rather than support the local economy
- Its location will be highly attractive to commuters who will outbid local people for housing
- The Great Eastern Mainline can't cope with the projected growth in demand¹⁶
- The A120 is already congested and dangerous. Dualling must be complete before any housing is built at Marks Tey¹⁷



¹ The emerging local plan emphasizes housing rather than jobs or infrastructure. We need a credible plan for high value job creation in North Essex fuelled by the University and Stansted rather than London

² Colchester's "infrastructure last" approach envisages planning West Tey before the route of the new A120/A12 is known; and starting to build it before the road is complete. No consideration is given to the huge infrastructure cost of expanding capacity on the Great Eastern Mainline. Infrastructure throughout the Borough has fallen seriously behind, including hospitals and broadband as well as road and rail.

³ Colchester's Councillors were discouraged from attending CAUSE's conference on 27th November 2015 at which its professional team laid out an alternative vision. Council officers have been reluctant to consider this vision despite having £640,000 government funding to do so via the "Shadow Board" set up between Braintree, Colchester and Tendring.

⁴ Colchester Borough Council has refused to accept CAUSE's 6600 signature petition for debate in contravention of its own petition rules. CAUSE has legal advice that its stance is legally incorrect as well as unwise.

⁵ ECC is planning a consultation on the A12/A120 route in November 2016.

⁶ Dr. Nicholas Falk has an international reputation as an urban designer and recently won the Wolfson prize for his work on how to develop sustainable viable and popular garden settlements. His ideas for Colchester were presented at CAUSE's conference on 27 November 2015. See www.cause4livingessex.com.

⁷ Garden City Developments is a "not for profit" adviser to the Shadow Board. Its consultants are well placed to open a dialogue with landowners in alternative locations to ensure that a fair proportion land value uplift is available for infrastructure.

⁸ Other Boroughs such as Tendring and Maldon have much lower objectively assessed housing numbers. It is clear that Colchester's new housing estates have attracted inward migration, and that its forecasts are based on a spurious extrapolation of past trends.

⁹ CAUSE transport consultant Tim Pharoah has documented the lack of a coherent transport plan for Colchester. See <http://www.cause4livingessex.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Tim-Pharoah-Living-Transport-report-for-CAUSE-FINAL.pdf> The Campaign for Better Transport has ranked Colchester at 28th out of 29 cities studied for public transport.

¹⁰ West Tey cannot start until the A120 is complete i.e. 2025 at the earliest. Marking it on a map for later years will serve no purpose other than to blight people's homes and reduce land value uplift available for infrastructure

¹² The local plan process has become too technical and boring to most people. The Council should engage a visionary urban design firm to develop a concept that the community can understand and accept.

¹³ A Community Infrastructure Levy allows Councils to raise money from developers for infrastructure. Many Councils already have one in place, but in Colchester developers pay nothing unless there is a s106 agreement. A recent consultation suggested £150 per square metre on greenfield land, and zero on brownfield.



¹⁴ The Council has no brownfield land register and thus can't be sure that brownfield sites are used first.

¹⁵ CAUSE rail consultant Jonathan Tyler has shown how the service can be doubled at a fraction of the cost of increasing capacity on the Great Eastern Main Line. See <http://www.cause4livingessex.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Jonathan-Tyler-CAUSE-Report-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁶ Network Rail forecasts a 75% increase in passenger demand for the Great Eastern Main Line over a 30 year period. See Network Rail Anglia Route Study November 2014 page 7. There are no fundable plans for providing for the increase, and no mechanisms for including the long term infrastructure costs in West Tey's viability appraisal. Clearly development should be orientated to the local economy not London, otherwise existing and new commuters will suffer.

¹⁷ CAUSE does not accept any linkage between housing immediately alongside a trunk road and funding for that road. The A120 is a Trans European Network road whose benefits will be spread throughout the region and beyond. Its funding should derive from a strategic plan for the North Essex region, not from any one settlement.