Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation – Summary Report

The consultation

The Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation was undertaken for a six week period from the 27th April to the 8th June 2009. During the consultation period 3 public workshops and exhibitions were undertaken at the following locations:

- Burnham Town Council Offices, 7th May 2009
- Maldon Town Hall, 13th May 2009
- Wickham Bishops Village Hall, 26th May 2009

The workshops provided the opportunity for local residents and other interested stakeholders to discuss proposals in the Preferred Options document with planning officers from the Council, and ask any questions on the consultation document and process.

Copies of the Preferred Options document and questionnaire were made available for the public to inspect on the Council’s website, at the District Council Offices, and all public libraries in the District. Press releases promoting the consultation were sent to local newspapers ahead of the start of the consultation period, and the official notice informing the public of the consultation was posted in the Essex Chronicle. Leaflets promoting the consultation were handed out in Maldon and Burnham High Street, and at local train stations.

Consultation letters and where appropriate hard copies of the document, promotional leaflets and posters were sent to all statutory consultees, parish councils, and people on the Council’s consultation mailing list.

The responses received are currently being used to information the production of the Maldon District Local Development Plan for the District.

Overall summary of responses

97 responses were received on the consultation document. The responses were generally based around the questionnaire produced to accompany the consultation document. The topics that raised the largest number of responses related to the location and size of future growth in the District and the provision of associated infrastructure, housing, and transport.

The following section provides a summary of all the responses to the consultation organised into key themes identified from the responses.

Affordable housing

- The Spatial Vision should identify the need for more affordable housing.
- Affordable housing may not be appropriate in the countryside where there is a lack of other facilities.
- The provision of affordable housing should be restricted to long term local residents.
- The strategy should include and justify an affordable housing target of 40%, higher than that proposed in the RSS.
- The minimum of 40% affordable housing is considered to be excessive given the economic climate and level of historic provision.
- The base target for affordable housing should be higher than 40%, and the threshold should be lower than 5 dwellings.
- A threshold of 5 units is too low and will make smaller developments unviable.
- Low thresholds for the requirement to deliver affordable housing may not be viable to the development industry.
• The location of affordable homes should be limited to larger settlements were there are existing or proposed services and facilities.
• The best way of providing more affordable housing is to exceed the RSS target and allocate more housing in the District.
• There should be an opportunity to negotiate the level of affordable housing that should be provided on financial grounds.
• The Council should pursue a more aggressive approach to achieving affordable housing with new development and lower the threshold as appropriate in urban and rural areas.
• The Plan should put forward a 70 / 30 split between social rented and intermediate housing.
• Agreements should be made with RSLs to ensure a high standard of affordable housing.

Agriculture
• Policy CS2 should identify the importance of farming / food production.
• The Council should aim to provide more fruit orchards and land for dairy herds.

Coastal Issues
• Further consideration of coastal issues and processes is required in the Core Strategy

Density
• Density requirements should be flexible to allow for lower density and more parking provision where appropriate.
• No upper density limit should be prescribed in Policy CS5.

Ecology, environmental issues, and green infrastructure
• There should be greater consideration of designated wildlife sites present in the area in the Strategy.
• Further information should be provided on the District’s environmental assets and the impact of climate change on biodiversity and water supply.
• The Spatial Vision should make reference to important environmental features of the District.
• Further consideration of green infrastructure is required in the Core Strategy Objectives.
• The Core Strategy Objectives should seek generally to minimise the impact of climate change.
• Policy CS1 should seek to create and enhance green spaces and wildlife areas in new development.
• Further information is required in policy CS18 on promoting sustainable use of soil and water resources.
• Policy CS19 should provide greater focus on the enhancement of habitats and meeting the targets set out in the Essex Biodiversity Strategy.
• Reference should be made in Policy CS19 to ‘Living Landscapes’, which should be considered as part of the green infrastructure network.
• Policy CS19 should provide further consideration of how natural systems and biodiversity adapt to climate change.
• Policy CS23 should refer specifically to environmentally designated sites.

Employment and Economic growth
• There is a need for greater focus on creating new jobs in the area.
• The Strategy should aim to make the District more economically self-contained.
• The Core Strategy Objectives should provide further consideration of promoting economic prosperity.
• Policy CS1 understates the need for more employment in the District.
• Further information is required to identify how the employment growth target can be accommodated in the District.
The need to identify new and improved employment sites should be made clear in the Strategy. Further information should be provided in the Strategy to identify appropriate employment allocations.

It is considered that the existing employment allocations in the District are insufficient to secure the Council’s economic objectives.

The Strategy should aim to provide more employment land in the District, and address a shortfall in allocation from the previous Local Plan.

Employment allocations should be ‘clustered’ around key strategic areas.

Policy CS12 should identify a sustainable pattern of employment for the District.

Employment allocations should not be protected from uses which are not B Class Uses.

Greater flexibility to encourage new and alternative employment uses, such as live/work units should be included in Policy CS13.

Comprehensive impact assessments should be required for all employment proposals, particularly in relation to traffic movements.

Energy generation

- Provide further information on proposals for a new nuclear power station at Bradwell-on-Sea.
- Further information should be provided on how renewable energy proposals will be considered by the Council.
- Further consideration should be given to renewable energy production in the District.
- Further information on renewable energy is required in policy CS23.
- Consideration should be given to rising sea levels in relation to the location of a new nuclear power station in the District.

Flooding

- Policy CS1 needs to fully demonstrate that the findings of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment have been considered, particularly were key locations for growth are in areas that are susceptible to flooding.
- Sites in any kind of flood zone should be discounted as development sites. Future housing growth should not be located in any form of Flood Zone.
- Sites within Flood Zone 3 should only be excluded when there is no prospect of investment in flood protection infrastructure.
- Further information should be provided in policy CS23 on development subject to flood risk and seeking appropriate mitigation measures.
- The Council should allocate housing on flood zone 1 land when it is previously developed land.
- Policy CS24 should establish measures that should be undertaken to protect existing residential areas which are vulnerable to flooding.
- Policy CS24 should encourage the heightening, improvement and extension of sea or river wall defences to enable Flood Zone 3 land to be developed.
- Policy CS24 should treat Flood Zone 2 and 3 land in a similar way.
- Reference should be made in policy CS24 to the Essex Shoreline Management Plan.
- Policy CS24 should not preclude any use in Flood Zone 3 within the Central Maldon Area were risks can be mitigated.
- Further information should be included in policy CS24 on existing flood risk and potential impact of climate change.

Growth levels, locations and infrastructure provision

- The Core Strategy should consider the expansion of existing settlement boundaries throughout the District to help meet development needs.
- The Strategy should consider increasing settlement boundaries near out of town retail centres to create mixed use development using existing infrastructure, such as at Wycke Hill.
- The Core Strategy should encourage infilling in smaller villages near the A12 to provide more housing.
• The Strategy should provide greater consideration of the impact of proposals on surrounding towns and villages outside the District.
• Policy CS1 should direct a greater proportion of development to key service centres such as Southminster, Purleigh, Althorne and Woodham Walter.
• Policy CS1 should promote the expansion of settlement boundaries.
• Heybridge should not be considered as a town and be subject to the same level of growth as Maldon or Burnham. There should be a lower level of growth proposed for Heybridge.
• Rural areas should not be used to provide more housing
• The Core Strategy should seek to limit population growth in the District, to allow the area to be more self-sufficient.
• The Core Strategy should promote the development of more social housing.
• Further consideration of infrastructure provision in strategic locations in Maldon and Heybridge is required to ensure proposed levels of growth can be accommodated.
• A higher level of growth should be allocated to villages in the District. This should be included in Policy CS3.
• Additional housing should be allocated at Langford.
• The proposed level of growth would be unsustainable in terms of ratio of available agricultural land to inhabitants in the District. Increasing population levels should be proportionate to available local farming land and employment.
• Land should be reclaimed from the shoreline of the Dengie to provide more housing land.
• A secondary school should be provided in Southminster to accommodate growth levels.
• The quantum of development at each strategic location should be more clearly outlined in the Strategy.
• Greater flexibility of housing numbers is required in case some sites do not come forward.
• Significant growth should be directed towards ‘Key Service Centres’.
• A lower level of growth should be planned for in relation to a projected ageing population and associated increasing mortality rate in the District.
• The Core Strategy should highlight a preference to providing new development on previously developed land close to existing settlements.
• Further information is required on the infrastructure requirements to accommodate growth in Heybridge.
• The Core Strategy should consider a different pattern of growth distribution based on creating new growth centres.
• The Strategy should provide more explanation on the preferred approach for the provision of infrastructure and services in relation to existing settlements.

Healthcare
• The Strategy should provide greater emphasis on the provision of healthcare facilities particularly in relation to future demographic changes.
• The Core Strategy Objectives should provide more focus on healthcare.
• Policy CS1 understates the need for more healthcare facilities in the District.

Heritage
• Further information should be provided in policy CS18 on the protection sites of historic interest.
• Further information should be provided in policy CS20 on the conservation of undesignated historic buildings which are considered to be important.
• Policy CS20 should include pro-active planning measures which enables development and enhances heritage assets.
• Further information should be provided in Policy CS20 on the unique historic environment features of the District.
• Further consideration should be given in policy CS23 to the impact of new development on historic assets
Housing

- There should be a reduction in minimum and maximum housing target for the District.
- The Strategy should provide further assessment of the implications of increasing the allocation of housing in the area, and the impact on infrastructure.
- Further information should be provided in the Strategy on proposed housing density and type throughout the District.
- The allocation of new housing at Maldon should consider the commuting route of new residents, and the impact this will have on the surrounding area.
- The Spatial Vision should outline how settlements in the District will develop and identify specific areas for strategic growth.
- The Core Strategy should provide a greater level of housing than the minimum set out in the RSS. The RSS target should be considered as a minimum level of housing to be provided.
- The Core Strategy Objectives should identify the type of housing needs that will be addressed by the strategy, such as accommodation for older people.
- An increased provision of care housing is required to manage the expected change in the demographic profile of the District.
- Blocks of flats are not wanted in rural areas as there are mainly low rise buildings.
- The proposed level of housing growth does not meet the level of demand identified in the District.
- Further information is required in Policy CS3 to justify proposed level of housing growth.
- A higher housing level should be planned for in the District.
- The Strategy should aim to provide an increased amount of larger family homes. This has also been identified by local politicians.
- The Plan should be more flexible to consider that some sites may not be suited to providing a mix of housing types.
- Private and social housing does not work well together in mixed developments.

Pollution

- Greater consideration of the impact of warehousing and distribution activities on local residents near such employment sites should be provided in the Strategy, particularly in relation to the movement of HGV traffic.

Protection of designated environmental sites and important landscapes

- Further information should be provided in policy CS18 on the protection of countryside views and designated sites of environmental importance.
- Policy CS19 should provide greater focus on conserving 'important designated sites'.
- Further reference should be made to the conclusions of the Maldon Landscape Character Assessment in policy CS19.

Regeneration

- There should be greater focus on the need for social, economic, and physical regeneration in the District.
- The Strategy should provide further information on the economy of the District, including current levels of employment and out commuting.
- The Strategy should provide greater consideration of the redevelopment of run down housing areas.
- The Core Strategy should recognise the regeneration of derelict sites as a priority.
- Greater flexibility is required in policy CS12 to allow non-B Class Uses where these are linked to regeneration.
Retail and leisure
- The Strategy should provide greater consideration of the impact of out of centre retail development in Maldon Town.
- The Spatial Vision should identify the importance of existing established out of centre retail developments in the area.
- Policy CS1 understates the need for more retail and leisure in the District.
- The Core Strategy does not address the need for new comparison floorspace. There is considered to be significant need for comparison goods floorspace in the District.
- There should be a greater consideration of the benefits that can be gained from increasing retail floorspace within the District, such as widening the range of available facilities and clawing back a proportion of lost expenditure.
- The Strategy should aim to prevent retail leakage out of Maldon to other nearby centres such as Chelmsford.
- Further information should be provided in chapter 4 on the retail and leisure needs of the District.
- The Strategy should provide improvements to the retail area at Heybridge.
- The Strategy should encourage upper floor domestic use in retail premises in policy CS14.
- The Strategy should not promote large scale out of town retail which could damage the viability of town centres.
- The Strategy should consider an approach to managing empty retail properties, and bringing them back into use.
- Maldon and Heybridge do not have the demand for hotel accommodation proposed in the Strategy.
- Hotel development should be spread across the District, rather than being located in one location.
- Policy CS17 should recognise the role that leisure facilities can have in maintaining the vitality and viability of existing settlements.

Rural issues
- The Strategy should provide greater consideration of the aims and objectives of the Taylor Review.
- The Strategy should allow more development in rural areas.
- The Strategy should consider the amount of land required to enable towns and villages in the District to be self-sufficient.
- Further clarity is required in the Strategy on what is considered a rural building and what uses could be undertaken in such buildings.

Section 106 developer contributions
- Policy CS27 should state that the mechanism for obtaining developer contributions must satisfy tests set out in Circular 05/2005, and should exceed the guidance.
- The Core Strategy should provide further information on expectations for developer contributions. It is not clear from the policy or the supportive text what are the mechanisms to be put in place to ensure the delivery of local infrastructure and services.
- Policy CS27 should not encourage the use of unilateral obligations. The use of S106 agreements is considered appropriate.

Skills
- A vocational training centre is required to address the educational and skills shortfall in the District. Links need to be made to universities within Essex.
- The Strategy should identify more options to improve skills in the area.
- There is a need for an arts centre venue in Maldon.
**Supported housing**
- Contributions towards the cost of providing supported needs housing should only be provided on the basis of viability.
- Supported housing needs to be located close to good public transport links.

**Sustainable development**
- The Core Strategy Objectives should include the aspiration to achieve zero carbon development.
- Policy CS5 should encourage the use of roof panels for electricity generation and insulation of new dwellings.
- Policy CS5 should require new development to reach at least level 3 in the Code for Sustainable Homes.
- Further information on sustainable construction should be included in policy CS21.
- Policy CS23 should include encouraging all housing to use solar panels.
- Policy CS23 should make achieving a level 3 Code for Sustainable Homes mandatory.
- All development should be encouraged to exceed minimum targets for sustainable construction and water efficiency.
- Policy CS23 should encourage energy/water efficiency for new development.

**Tourism**
- The Strategy should provide further information on the kind of tourism development that would be acceptable in the countryside.
- The Spatial Vision requires greater consideration of the role of tourism on the District.
- Policy CS2 should outline the type of tourism development that is considered acceptable in the countryside.
- There should be more emphasis on making tourism related development acceptable in the countryside.
- New development related to tourism should not impact upon environmentally designated sites.
- Tourism strategy should recognise the importance of the historic environment.
- Tourism policy should consider the growth of holiday park development in the District.

**Transport**
- Core Strategy Objectives should include maintaining, improving, and co-ordinating public transport provision in the District.
- There should be a Core Strategy Objective to meet the Districts employment, retail and leisure needs in locations accessible by a range of travel modes.
- The Core Strategy should seek to restore the rail link to Maldon.
- Growth north of Maldon will put pressure on the B1019. A bypass would be required to accommodate growth.
- The Strategy should be clearer about how it proposes to reduce the distance that residents commute.
- Policy CS18 should provide further information on the amount of parking available for visitors.
- The creation of an electric bus link from the Prom to the High Street in Maldon Town should be considered in the Strategy.
- Further information should be provided in relation to rail capacity in the District, and the amount of carriages which stations could accommodate.
- Increased truck movements should not be encouraged in the District. Other options such as light rail or reuse of the canal network should be considered.
- The Core Strategy should seek to encourage bus companies to enhance, extend and improve the frequency of services in the District.
- The Core Strategy should include the need for improved access to Maldon on the B1019, which is included in the Essex Local Transport Plan 2006-2011.
• Consideration should be given to the development of a light rail or tram system using the route of the old rail line.
• Any significant expansion of Maldon Town should include a new link road to the A12, bypassing Langford, Ulting and Hatfield Peveral.
• The Core Strategy should seek to improve connectivity and transport services between rural areas and regional cities.
• Policy CS25 should require all new development to contribute towards transport / accessibility.
• Further consideration is required in policy CS25 to providing safe and direct walking and cycling routes to appropriate services.
• The production of the Core Strategy should include liaising with the Community Rail Partnership.
• The Core Strategy should include improvements to triangle roundabout / Colchester Road.
• Policy CS26 needs a more effective understanding of the frequency and timing of bus services and other forms of public transport.
• Policy CS26 should provide for improvements in bus services to some of the most remote parts of the District.
• Policy CS26 needs to effectively address the issue of car park provision in the District.
• There is a need to improve the capacity of the Districts roads.
• The need for bus services between Tiptree and the Maldon District should be included in policy CS26.

Travellers
• Core Strategy Objectives should aim to locate Travellers sites near existing settlements and main facilities such as schools and shops.
• Policy CS2 should restrict gypsy and traveller sites in rural areas. They should be located in more sustainable locations near services and facilities.
• A specific policy is required in the Strategy for Travelling Showpeople.
• Further information is required to identify how Policy CS10 is acceptable on infrastructure, access and environmental grounds.
• Gypsy and Traveller sites should not be located in the countryside, it is more sustainable for these to be located near larger settlements where there are accessible services and facilities.
• Flood risk criteria should be used in relation to the location of Gypsy and Traveller sites in Policy CS10.
• Gypsy and Traveller sites should form part of NI 154 of the Core Strategy monitoring indicators, and should be part of net additional homes that are provided.

Viability
• Policy CS8 should consider how the viability of schemes should be assessed.

Waste and minerals
• The Strategy should consider minerals sites and minerals policy in assessing development locations.

General comments on the Strategy
• Further information should be provided on the evidence base that informed the production of the Core Strategy.
• Further clarity is required on link between the draft Core Strategy and previous stakeholder participation.
• The key diagram should include road, rail links, key constraints, and strategic growth locations.
• Further explanation is required on the preferred approach, and how the SFRA findings influenced the settlement hierarchy.
• Southminster should be included in the settlement hierarchy as a town.
• The settlement hierarchy should include primary and secondary rural centres for places such as Little Braxted, Wickham Bishops, Latchingdon etc.
• Policy CS2 should provide more flexibility to allow development outside of settlement boundaries.
• Windfall developments should not be considered in policy CS4 beyond 2013, this is contrary to national policy.
• Rural housing policy should focus purely on affordable housing and exception sites.
• Further information is required in policy CS22 on the preparation and status of a concept statement.
• The Core Strategy should more clearly state who will produce the AMR.
• The Core Strategy monitoring indicators should be outlined by policies rather than key themes.
• National Indicators H2 (c), (d), and E1 should be included in the Core Strategy monitoring.
• The monitoring data should include the number of homes not occupied all year round, number of hectares of agricultural land in use, number of miles of dedicated cycle paths, and number of apprentices engaged in manufacturing / technology.
• More public participation is required to make people aware of the Core Strategy.
• More detailed implementation information is required on specific projects, funding, phasing and delivery partners.

**Agree or disagree question responses**

The consultation questionnaire included a number of questions which required the selection of agreeing or disagreeing with a policy in the draft Core Strategy. The questionnaire then asked further questions based on this response which have been summarised above. The following section outlines the responses received to the ‘agree or disagree’ questions in the consultation questionnaire:

**Question 5. Supporting the Spatial Vision (page 15) for the Maldon District:**
• 16 people agree with the Council’s Spatial Vision, 5 people disagree.

**Question 7. Supporting the Core Strategy Objectives (page 17):**
• 13 people agree with the Core Strategy Objectives, 9 people disagree.

**Question 9. Supporting the proposed settlement hierarchy (page 18):**
• 18 people agree with the proposed settlement hierarchy, 9 people disagree.

**Question 11. Supporting Policy CS1:**
• 17 people agree with the approach of policy CS1

**Question 13. Supporting Policy CS2:**
• 9 people agree with policy CS2, 14 people disagree.

**Question 17. Supporting Policy CS3:**
• 14 people agree the approach to policy CS3. 16 disagree.

**Question 19. Agreed with Policy CS4:**
• 9 people agree with the approach of policy CS4, 5 people disagree.

**Question 21. Agreed with Policy CS5:**
• 11 people agree with the approach of Policy CS5, 3 people disagree.

**Question 23. Agree with Policy CS6:**
• 11 people agree with policy CS6, 7 people disagree.

**Question 25. Agree with Policy CS7:**
• 11 People agree with the approach of Policy CS7, 3 people disagree.

Question 27. Agree with Policy CS8:
• 11 people agree with Policy CS8, 10 people disagree.

Question 29. Supporting Policy CS9:
• 6 people agree with Policy CS9, 3 people disagree.

Question 31. Supporting Policy CS10:
• 8 people agree with Policy CS10, 9 people disagree

Question 33. Supporting Policy CS11:
• 9 people agree with Policy CS11, no people disagree.

Question 37. Supporting Policy CS12:
• 9 people agree with Policy CS12, 11 people disagree.

Question 39. Supporting Policy CS13:
• 8 people agree with Policy CS13, 4 people disagree.

Question 41. Supporting Policy CS14:
• 7 people agree to the approach of CS14, 2 people disagree.

Question 43. Supporting Policy CS15:
• 7 people agree with the approach of Policy CS15, 1 person disagrees.

Question 45. Supporting Policy CS16:
• 7 people agree with the approach of Policy CS16, 1 person disagrees

Question 47. Supporting Policy CS17:
• 14 people agree to the approach of Policy CS17, 2 people disagree

Question 49. Supporting Policy CS18:
• 11 people support Policy CS18, 3 people disagree

Question 53. Supporting Policy CS19:
• 13 people agree with Policy CS19, 2 people disagree

Question 55. Supporting Policy CS20:
• 10 people agree with Policy CS20, 2 people disagree.

Question 57. Supporting Policy CS21:
• 11 people agree with policy CS21, no people disagree

Question 59. Supporting Policy CS22:
• 11 people agree with policy CS22, 4 people disagree

Question 61. Supporting Policy CS23:
• 11 people agree with policy CS23, 3 people disagree

Question 63. Supporting Policy CS24:
• 8 people agree with policy CS24, 7 people disagree

Question 67. Supporting Policy CS25:
• 14 people agree with policy CS14, 2 people disagree
Question 69. Supporting Policy CS 26:
• 20 people agree with policy CS26, 1 person disagrees

Question 73. Supporting Policy CS 27:
• 12 people agree with policy CS27, 6 people disagree

Question 75. Support the approach for implementation and monitoring:
• 5 people agree that the implementation and monitoring of the Core Strategy is sound and robust, 1 person disagrees