

Marks Tey Parish Council - Response to Colchester Borough Council Draft Local Plan – Issues and Options Consultation – February 2015

1. Introduction

Marks Tey Parish Council would like to make representation on the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation that appears to have huge implications for the Marks Tey area, in two parts:

- overall general comments;
- and specific answers and suggestions to some of the questions in the Issues and Options document.

In doing so Marks Tey Parish Council are

- seeking to improve the Borough approach to the formulation of the Local Plan but also seeking to reserve the right to use the points outline below to criticise the actual Draft Local Plan when it is issued on consultation later.
- are also concerned that with such emphasis in the Options on the west of the borough that we were left to the last of the Issues and Options Drop-in Sessions arranged by the Borough leaving the Council and residents only 6 days to question and submit comments.
- are similarly concerned that whilst attention is drawn in the Issues and Options Document to the over loaded nature of the A12 and A120, the environmental and separating effect of these roads on the community of Marks Tey is not mentioned as an Issue for the Local Plan to address. Marks Tey is the narrowest and most built up part of the A120 between Stansted and Harwich.
- are also concerned that there seems no way in which any responses to this Public Consultation will be made public before work on the Draft Local Plan commences.

For these reason the Parish Council are also circulating its representation to the individual Members of the Planning Committee and request to make such presentations, representations and discussion of the points raised as may be necessary.

2. Summary

The Development Options proposed in the Issues and Options Document are Marks Tey Parish Council's prime concern in that:

- the selected Options do not give an even variety of approaches across the borough and indicate a preconceived desire to go for maximum development to the west of the borough around Marks Tey. No substantiation for such a loaded options approach is included in the document (apart from oblique references to availability of land) and none of its implications examined.
- the Parish Council accepts that some development is needed around Marks Tey to address existing problems, but an additional option is required that reduces the proposed level of development to the west.
- all communities should carry the development load (as per option B) and use development to increase their sustainability.

Relative to the above.

- It is important that the infrastructure needs of development are provided in advance or at least in parallel with the development so that there is not a deficit or lag of need from new development, be that in terms of highway, health or educational requirements.

- It is important in areas of existing deficit of infrastructure need, that this deficit should be satisfied before starting new development that will make it worse.
- The Parish Council have concerns that all options are likely to apply a transport infrastructure (road and rail) load to Marks Tey's existing inadequate facilities so feel that all developments within the Local Plan should contribute to solving the current infrastructure deficits in Marks Tey (and other A120 and trunk road communities) that they will all to some extent use and make worse.

On the Issues, Marks Tey Parish Council feels that:

- The replacement of the 5 year Local Plan for a 15 year document is welcome and the Boroughs aspiration to plan beyond 2032 in the proposed Local Plan is realistic and helpful.
- The Issues and Options Document produced by the Borough Council, however, lacks vision and aspiration for this timeframe particularly as to putting forward any overall concept of the borough and how the Borough Council would like to see it develop over the duration of the Local Plan or at least the issues and criteria towards this that should be developed in the Draft Local Plan. This may be detailed in the Strategic Plan (which only runs to 2018) but if so this should be referenced and referred to. Thus the Parish Council feel that the Issues upon which the Local Plan should be based to 2932 and beyond should include:
 - that the Local Plan seeks to develop and maintain independent sustainable communities throughout the borough which look to Colchester town for their wider economic, social and entertainment needs.
 - that the Local Plan seeks to promote, develop, and maintain health facilities of national excellence that are easily accessible to all of the communities throughout the borough.
 - that the safety of residents and users of the borough are paramount and that the Local Plan should promote safe communities, environments and movement though out the borough.
 - Seeking to promote excellent sporting facilities that give flexibility to the growing and changing needs of the community and the clubs that serve them.

The Issues and Option document does not address the funding issues that will inevitably arise from the Local Plan. If the delivery of the Local Plan is expected to come from development contributions then a particular approach and aspirations can be expected. If a combination of developer and public sector contributions then what are the criteria for injection of public funds. The inclusion of this would increase clarity and innovation of approach to the Local Plan

The issue of a Garden City approach to new development assumes a development of at least some 15000 homes and surely is subject to whether the development and the Garden City concept conforms with the issues and principles set out in the Local Plan both for that development and on the surrounding communities.

3. Issues and Options Questions

Vision

The Issues and Options Document takes a mechanistic approach to the Issues – housing, heritage and townscape, etc but the Borough Council are missing setting a clear Vision and Inspiration of how it sees the Borough develop as issues to be

achieved or assisted by the Local Plan. The Parish Council's suggestions to this are in the Summary above

In trying to answer specific questions on the Issues the Parish Council feel:

Housing

The criteria for 'sustainable locations' to support development and 'affordable housing' need to be stated and clarified.

'Achieving high quality sustainable housing design' is highly idealistic but needs to be matched with a commitment to Sustainable Construction'.

Centres and Employment

Different communities have different sustainability factors. Those near transport, like Marks Tey, will rely on this more for its sustainability than rural communities but not if the transport facilities are at breaking point. Communities need detailed definition of their own Sustainability factors i.e. a Neighbourhood Plan and Marks Tey Parish Council have resolved to host the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Rural Colchester

There is a growing trend towards urban sprawl to the west of Colchester with Stanway becoming physically joined to Copford and decreasing separation between Copford and Marks Tey. This is an issue for the Local Plan. This cannot be desirable. A local Plan issue should be to preserve and enhance the separation of Colchester Borough communities with quality rural landscape and good communication with Colchester town (vehicles, public transport, cycling, and walking).

Another issue should be to protect enhance and make available our heritage, such as the 1880 Colliers brick kilns at Marks Tey and the Roman villa sites.

Healthy Communities

There should be a commitment to enhance as well as protect local landscape, open space and amenities for both existing and proposed development and communities, and to be innovative with the open spaces for learning, allotments, and activity, as well as for visual relief.

Growth Options

The Parish Council feels that the chosen options indicate a preconceived solution with 4 of the 6 detailed options proposing exactly the same 1500 additional development proposals adjacent to Marks Tey. One of these Options should be amended to reduced development to the west.

Assuming that more development around Marks Tey can early resolve and relocate the existing overloaded A120, the major problem facing Marks Tey is the scar created by the A12. Marks Tey Parish Council would like to see this addressed by forming a self sustaining village around the A12 enhancing landscape and breaking down the barrier of the A12 with additional bridges and noise barriers thus leaving the station, shops, church and village hall as the centre of the village .

The alternative of developing two separate communities either side of the A12 - an east Marks Tey and a west Marks Tey simply would increase the damage done in the 1960s when the A12 split the village.

The worst solution to the provision of any additional development would seem to be significant development immediately to the west of Marks Tey with a notional

landscape barrier between the two and no enhancement of Marks Tey to sustainable standards.. This could leave Marks Tey with its current un-sustainability with the Coggeshall Road almost as busy as it is now acting as a primary distributor to Great Tey and the new community to the west.

It is important that development undertaken particularly infrastructure does not repeat what was inflicted upon Marks Tey in the 1960's with the A12. New infrastructure should not become barriers to pedestrians, cyclist, or the social infrastructure of communities

If high density means high rise then this should be resisted as it would be a significant departure for Colchester with its rural north Essex situation. If high density can be achieved in low rise then this should be assessed relative to its situation and to the part it plays in the totality of a proposal. No schemes should be totally high density.

4. Conclusion

Generally Marks Tey Parish Council feels that the Local Plan should be more visionary and inspirational for both new development and for how identified issues in the existing communities need to be overcome. It is important that the Issues and Options basis of the Local Plan not only set out how new development will be provided and to set high standards for it and detail how the infrastructure needs of those developments are met, but also does so in a way that new development addresses areas of environmental, social, and infrastructure needs that already exists within existing communities, all to produce innovative, effective and efficient solutions to the borough's problems and opportunities.

Specifically, relative to Marks Tey, on paper Marks Tey's assets are substantial, a primary school, pub, post office, garage, deli, mainline station etc, etc but Marks Tey lacks a sense of place or cohesive community as the community is divided by two high volume trunk roads, the A12 and A120, and it is these trunk roads that partially support the village assets. The Parish Council feels that these issues should be reflected in the Issues and Option that the Local Plan will seek to address. In other communities the balance of local assets and aspirations will be different but no less important.

The Parish Council feels that some development in Marks Tey to ease these problems is desirable but not so much that the existing communities are dwarfed and that the Options set out are too biased (4 out of the 6 options proposing 1500 homes to the west) towards major development.

Marks Tey Parish Council, along with many views expressed at the Drop in Session, feel that early provision of infrastructure with development is essential and that existing infrastructure deficiencies should be made good prior to development if a community is not to be left worse off by that development. Many people feel that current transport congestion is a critical factor in the borough.

The Parish Council would also greatly like to see what changes (if any) the consultation has made on the Borough Council's Issues and Options prior to the formulation of the Draft Local Plan so that the value of consultation can be seen to be effective and worth participation.