

Colchester & District Green Party's response to proposed CBC Local Plan

Consultation process > 16 Sept. 2016

Colchester Green Party believes the use of agricultural and greensward areas for residential development/new towns is short-sighted and fails to acknowledge the impact of development on our environment and climate and the need for areas to produce sustainable locally sourced food.

1. We support the use of brownfield sites and the conversion of vacant stores and larger properties into residential units/communities. The recent consent for enlarged retail/leisure areas in Stanway and possibly Myland will further deplete the number of visitors to the Town Centre - it will therefore be even more important to promote it as a cultural centre, an attractive place to live and commute from or work in.
2. CGP opposes the current compartmentalisation of our County's infrastructure and objects to this vast tranche of new developments of residential areas without the appropriate levels of NHS, Education, Transport and Employment facilities. The Local Plan in its current form needs clarification: a clear definition of 'sustainable development'; with an anticipated growth in the population of 18,400 people by 2033, exactly what increases in NHS services would be required and how would they be funded; exactly what 'improvements to rail services' are envisaged and, again, how would they be funded; how would the areas and highways around Colchester cope with the additional footfall, bus passengers and car journeys required by such an increase in commuters – as there would certainly not be sufficient work available in the CBC area to sustain 18,400 more residents. Furthermore, despite trying to suggest that local wildlife and ancient habitat would be protected, the underlying message stated in this Local Plan is that 'the benefits of development clearly outweigh the impact upon ... habitats'.
3. We support investment in publicly owned services such as the NHS, Education and efficient, eco-friendly transport services. We believe it is critical that planners take into account the effects of the constant reliance on fossil fuelled transport and the negative impact this has on the environment, climate and our health, due to air pollution. We strongly advocate that people have homes where they can access transport to places of employment and walk/cycle to schools and doctors' surgeries in their local Wards. We favour the building and conversion of empty properties to Council-owned residential units, available at affordable rents for long-term tenants – but not to buy. In the Colchester Borough we have many residents who cannot afford to purchase their own properties and are caught in the poverty trap resulting in an increase in homelessness and tenants of privately owned properties claiming rented Housing Benefit – which in effect means that the public are subsidising the purchases of properties on buy to let mortgages, ie: much needed public funds are being diverted into the hands of private landlords rather than back into public services.
4. We need greener, cleaner public transport servicing residential, industrial, commercial and retail areas at regular and timely intervals. Many bus services cease before workers can get home from retail/industrial areas. We expect people to be available to work

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shifts 24/7 yet do not provide a public transport service that supports this. We should encourage people to purchase Electric Vehicles in preference to diesel and petrol and insist that all buses and taxis have lower/zero emission levels by a given time.

5. The current planning regulations fall far short of addressing climate, environmental and sustainable living issues. New properties must include a means to produce renewable energy (eg Solar panels), water butts, cycle storage, recycling bin storage and laundry drying areas. Many flat residents want to recycle their waste, cycle to work and/or leisure facilities, keep window boxes/pot plants and dry their clothes without resorting to a tumble drier. There should also be communal EV charge points in parking areas at stores and leisure centres.
6. Agricultural and public land is precious – it must not be given over to private business for profit making and buy to let sales. Indeed, many of the empty warehouses we have in the area might well be put to better use as small co-operatives for urban farming, providing local employment and produce. Colchester needs affordable Council housing, lower carbon emissions (cleaner air) and joined-up thinking. Yes, this Local Plan will create more homes but in so doing it will also create wealth for big developers; a huge headache for our already over-burdened NHS services; bottlenecks and traffic jams all around Colchester – the Hythe, Clingoe Hill, Ipswich Road, Tollgate, Marks Tey, as well as onto access roads on and off the A120 and A12.

CBC and ECC must be more innovative and forward thinking and not just the puppets for an out of touch central Government.