

Colchester Civic Society - Local Plan Review

Our No.	Page No.	Doc Ref:	Scheme/Area/Category	Comment(s)
1			General	<p>Whilst the plan highlights many new schemes for housing and other developments, there is little mention of infrastructure to support the increased numbers of residents.</p> <p>Schools are of specific concern for many. Colchester is known across the UK for having some of the best schools. However, most of these are over-subscribed. Given that one of the aspirations of the local plan is to enhance the future appeal of the town and economic enhancement of the area - provision of adequate, quality schools will be required to attract people to the town (especially families). The local plan could emphasise how this infrastructure could be delivered.</p>
2	50	3.3	The Economy SG1 and General	<p>It is good to see noted that Colchester has maintained good levels of employment (an increase of such higher than the rest of the UK) despite the decline in industrial employment. However, we are disappointed to see that Colchester's recorded employment growth was lower than across the rest of Essex as a whole (8.3% lower). We note that the local plan aspires to attract more start-ups and small businesses to Colchester. Are there any such aspirations to encourage larger employers to come to Colchester too (as these are likely to employ more people over a longer period)? The future for Colchester will depend new employment in various forms being attracted to the district. We would like to see more about how this will be achieved included in the plan. In our meeting with Howard Davies, we were advised that an inward investment plan is being developed and sight of this plan once available would be welcomed by the Society.</p>
3	68-69 70-71 111-112		Local Economic Areas	<p>There is a need to check whether these are consistent. Inclusion of Brook Street should be queried due to its being one of the most polluted AQMA's (see above).</p>
4	72	4.51/53	Cowdray Centre	<p>Paras 4.51/53 need to be re-written as it repeats itself.</p>

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5	76-77		Developer Contributions and Community Infrastructure Levy Policy (CIL)	There are many millions of pounds accumulating as a result of this with a danger that some will be returned to developers as unspent. There should be a pro-active policy to spend this money on desirable ends. Policy SG8 hints at this, but more can be done to spend less targeted sums to the benefit of the community.
6	81-83	5.12-14	Bradwell Power Station	It is Council policy that the Borough resist the erection of a new Nuclear Power Station at Bradwell. This opposition does not apply to new wind farms and there is one of these at Bradwell. The opposition centres on the effect of discharge of warm cooling water and low level radioactive waste into the Blackwater Estuary and its effect on ecology and fishing and also on the inability of Mersea people to evacuate the area easily in case of an emergency. This stance could usefully be referred to in the Plan together with the wording that refers to the need for protection of the Estuary (para 5.12-14 and ENV2).

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7	90		Air Pollution	<p>Not currently in Local Plan. Suggestion is that it's added at the end of Section 5.</p> <p>CBC has a statutory duty to monitor air pollution under the Environment Act 1995. The main polluters are fumes from motor vehicles in street with a high level of usage and a 'canyon' effect due to the historic built environment. Four problem areas (Air Quality Management Areas) have been identified, mostly but not all in the town centre.</p> <p>Historically there was no duty to do anything about these but I believe this is changing. Our policies should reflect this, as:</p> <p>a) Planning Applications that will be likely to increase or not decrease pollution in AQMA's will be refused.</p> <p>b) Planning Applications that are likely to ameliorate air pollution will be encouraged. The degree of amelioration will be the maximum obtainable subject to reasonable economic considerations.</p> <p>c) A Plan to reduce air pollution in AQMA's will be developed, starting with areas where the pollution is greatest. Implementation of the Plan will depend on statutory duties laid down nationally and the amount of financial assistance received from national and regional level.</p>
8	95	TC-3 Town Centre	Access off Queen Street	<p>We note that there is policy to provide access off Queen Street, the nature of which was not clear from the document. Having now met with Howard Davies, we have been assured that the access referred to is non-vehicular access in to the old bus station. Developing this site (as discussed) and providing pedestrian access would improve the appearance and use of buildings in Queen Street, which is something we are very supportive of.</p>

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9	95	TC-3 Town Centre	St Botolphs Development	<p>We were pleased to note the development of this area in the Local Plan (indicating the provision of cinema, 85-room hotel, restaurants, student accommodation and Creative Business Centre). However, we have some concerns about the amount of potential vehicular traffic this could bring into this part of the town centre. Again, car parking provision and road congestion are of concern, and we would like to see more about how this might be managed.</p>
10	193-194	DM16 Historic Environment		<p>We are pleased to see that reference is made in policy DM16 to the importance given to the protection of listed buildings.</p> <p>Additionally, the Local List is mentioned and it is good to hear the respect given to it. However, we have seen that a listed building, Doe's Mill, is in a distressing state despite warnings given about the condition. We appreciate that the Council's powers are restricted, we would like to hear more about how protection can be achieved. Doe's Mill is mentioned in Policy EC03 East Colchester as a site for some housing in East Bay.</p>

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11	204-206	DM22 Parking		<p>The sections relating to the Economy do refer to parking facilities, but we are concerned the comments could be more far reaching and that the increase of alternatives to the private car are optimistic. For Colchester to continue to improve as an attraction for shoppers, there does need to be full attention to parking facilities and pricing structure. A further Park and Ride scheme would be an important asset in achieving Colchester's aims. DM22 does refer to possible further Park & Ride sites but is unspecific. We also believe that there are indications from other towns, including Ipswich and, perhaps also, Chelmsford, that park and ride is not as successful as it was. Whilst other rapid transit plans are afoot, we seem to be assuming that they are going to both happen and succeed. We are concerned that the plan to lose so many town centre car parks might be a tad premature and, therefore, we would suggest that some of these should remain until the next draft plan in 20 or so years time.</p>
12	136	6.4		<p>A very small point but one with so many implications. There is a vast difference between the evening and the night-time economies. The former includes concerts, theatre, cinema, meals out, quiet drinks, town centre lectures etc. etc., the latter the late night pubs and clubs. The clientele tend to be completely different and, in the recent past, there have been some real clashes resulting in fewer people aged, perhaps, 45+ coming into the town for evening activities, particularly in the winter. Although things have changed fairly dramatically and the night-time economy is smaller and far less troublesome, there is still a need to recognise, and differentiate between, the two distinct economies. So we would recommend that this reads day, evening and night-time.</p>

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13		6.7		We have some concerns about student accommodation in this area. It would need to be incredibly well managed and we wonder how this might be done successfully. This needs to be an area which will attract visitors in huge numbers and student accommodation can be noisy and untidy with rubbish left out at random. We feel that the location chosen seems at odds with attracting visitors to the area.
14		6.8		Whilst we would welcome the redevelopment of Priory Walk, this should not be undertaken if there is any risk, at all, of losing Sainsbury's. They are the only remaining supermarket of any size in the town and their value is immense, both to town centre residents (historically far more than other, comparable, towns with numbers growing exponentially) and to those without cars coming into town once a week to shop. This is linked to DM22 on parking concerns.
15		6.9		With reference to Britannia Street? We do not believe that there is such a place? With regards to Britannia Car Park. Please see our comments on 6.58 and 6.61.
16		6.39		We have some concerns about the proximity of this development to the woodlands, despite the intention to put in buffers. Further information as to how this work is to be staged and how the woodlands would be protected would be welcomed.
17		6.58 and 6.61		We have huge concerns about these developments coupled with those at 6.9. We agree that there is a lot of useful brownfield land, however the congestion in Magdalen Street and Brook Street is already unacceptably high. The traffic jams and resulting pollution caused by additional development would be intolerable for residents and visitors alike. With reference to our comments in 6.8 and DM22 , should we really consider losing the Britannia car park yet? Additionally, the land in question is over an underground stream (fed by many springs), and therefore it is questionable how any works here could be undertaken both safely and with respect to the environment without a large amount of difficulty.

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18		6.88		<p>We feel very strongly about this area remaining untouched by works projects. This is one of only a tiny handful of very old urban orchards left in, not only the county, but the country. It contains rare trees and is a habitat for a vast array of wildlife, whilst also providing a sizeable length of green corridor. It should be managed properly as a community asset. To this end we know there is enough will in the area to make this happen. This orchard must be allowed to remain untampered with by development projects.</p>