

Supplementary Committee Agenda



Planning Services Scrutiny Standing Panel Monday, 10th January, 2011

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 7.00 pm

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins - Office of the Chief Executive
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7. HARLOW COUNCIL CORE STRATEGY ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT (Pages 3 - 8)

(Director of Planning and Economic Development) To consider the attached Appendix of the consultation questionnaire.

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Appendix to Planning Scrutiny Report 10 January 2011

Harlow Core Strategy Issues & Options questionnaire

Question 1 – Do you think the Council has identified all the relevant issues that need to be addressed by the Core Strategy?

No

Question 2 – If you disagree, what additional issues need to be considered by the Core Strategy?

- (a) The strategic role of the Green Belt, and the related policies of the adjoining authorities;
- (b) The wider landscape setting of the town, including in particular the southern ridge line;
- (c) The lack of alternatives to the option of 16,000 houses;
- (d) More prominence to climate change and more commitment to carbon reduction, energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Question 3 – Would the provision of 16,000 new homes in and around Harlow meet the current needs of the local community and help secure the regeneration of Harlow?

The regeneration of Harlow is supported, but the RSS evidence should be reconsidered and other options for growth should be presented for consultation. It is not currently possible to answer this question (in relation to potentially affected local communities in this district) as the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation will not take place until the summer of 2011.

Question 4 – If you disagree/strongly disagree, what do you think the scale of growth should be, ensuring that the Core Strategy addresses the particular issues facing Harlow?

An open question of this nature cannot be realistically answered without a supporting evidence base.

Question 5 – Do the visions and priorities set out in the Community Strategy, the Council's Regeneration Strategy and the Council's Corporate Plan provide the basis to develop the vision for Harlow's Core Strategy?

Yes – if they can all be fully implemented.

Question 6 – If you disagree/strongly disagree, what do you think the vision for the Core Strategy should be based on?

The vision should take full account of the equivalent documents of the adjoining authorities.

Question 7 – Do you think the Core Strategy Themes cover the range of planning issues in Harlow?

No

Question 8 – If you disagree/strongly disagree, what changes would you make to the Themes to ensure they address the range of planning issues in Harlow?

Broadly as the answer to Q2 above, ie:

- (a) appreciation of the regional purpose of the Green Belt;
- (b) the need to contain growth within the bowl of the Stort Valley, protecting the southern ridge line;
- (c) more prominent and positive support for sustainable construction, carbon reduction and the use of renewable energy.

Question 9 – Do the Strategic Objectives provide the necessary framework to deliver the regeneration of Harlow?

No

Question 10 – If you disagree/strongly disagree, what changes would you make to the Strategic Objectives?

“Strategic” objectives should be broader than the town itself, encompassing at least the two adjoining authorities. Thus the function of the Metropolitan Green Belt, the landscape setting of the town, climate change and methods to reduce or mitigate its impact should be included. “Delivery” of regeneration will require the co-ordinated input of a wide range of authorities and agencies, so joint or co-operative working should be a theme of the Core Strategy with related strategic objectives.

Question 11 – Do you think the policy areas identified cover the range of issues that are relevant to the regeneration of Harlow?

No

Question 12 – If you disagree/strongly disagree, what changes would you make to the policy areas?

Answers much as before, ie (a) broader understanding of the Green Belt and its importance to the adjoining authorities; (b) the importance to this Council of the southern ridge; (c) more prominence and positive support for sustainable development, and some definitions (eg sustainable location); (d) the policy areas should acknowledge that development in adjoining areas is being suggested.

Question 13 – Do you agree that new development should be directed to areas that will maximise regeneration of the town?

Yes but with the proviso that potential impact upon adjoining authorities must be taken fully into account, eg The Pinnacles site is already prominent from parts of Roydon parish, and any further expansion could raise concerns about settlement coalescence, landscape impact and traffic generation.

Question 14 – Please rank, in order of priority, where you think higher densities of development should go within the District (1 = highest priority, 5 = lowest priority)

	Priority				
	1	2	3	4	5
Around public transport hubs (railway station, bus station and bus stops)					
At appropriate locations within neighbourhood areas					
Hatches					
Neighbourhood Centres					
Within the Town Centre					

Officers propose not to answer this question as it is unlikely to raise issues of concern to this Council.

Question 15 – Should the Council consider underused open spaces and other undeveloped land for development before considering releasing land in the Green Belt?

Yes, but this will also depend on whether the spaces have other, currently unrecognised value, eg for wildlife or informal recreation.

Question 16 – The Green Wedges have performed a variety of roles in shaping Harlow. Should the roles of Green Wedges be reviewed to meet future development needs in the Harlow area?

This is strongly supported, given that the Green Belt in Epping Forest and East Herts is potentially threatened by urban extensions.

Question 17 – Please rank, in order of priority, the most important things that you think should direct new development in and around Harlow (1 = highest priority, 8 = lowest priority)

	Priority							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Areas with good access to public transport and other services and facilities				4				
Developing underused green spaces								8**
Maximising the use of previously developed land	1							
Meeting regeneration goals					5			
Protecting Green Wedges							7	
Protecting important landscapes			3					
Protecting the Green Belt		2						
Where there is existing infrastructure capacity						6		

** should be read in the sense of protecting underused green spaces

Question 18 – Do the existing employment areas meet current and future employment needs?

No to both.

Question 19 – If you disagree/strongly disagree, please explain what changes you think should be made to Harlow’s employment areas.

The employment needs of the wider area (ie at least the two adjoining authorities) should be included in any assessment. This Council would be concerned about any extension to the Pinnacles, and would need to consider employment land provision in the urban extensions.

Question 20 – How do you think Harlow Council should shape future shopping development within the Town?

The strategy proposed in the consultation document is appropriate for the town as a sub-regional centre, and in terms of protecting the role of the neighbourhood centres and hatches.

Question 21 – What is your view on the Consultant’s recommendations regarding Option A?

This Council favours this option over all the others.

Any further comments?

The greatest part of the growth will be close to the town centre, railway station and two of the main employment areas (The Pinnacles and Templefields). There will be minimal intrusion into the Green Belt in this district and no threat to the southern ridge line. The option does require significant new road infrastructure.

Question 22 – What is your view on the Consultant’s recommendations regarding Option B?

The Council agrees that it would be difficult to accommodate this level of growth to the west without significant adverse effect on the character of the area (including settlement coalescence with Roydon), but also feels that the southern ridge line could be threatened. The consultants’ concerns about encouraging increased use of the car are shared by the Council.

Any further comments?

Question 23 – What is your view on the Consultant’s recommendations regarding Option C?

This option is wholly unacceptable to this Council. The ridge line would be completely breached. Not only would there be significantly increased traffic using J7 of the M11, but there could be pressure for a southern bypass to Harlow.

Any further comments?

A new junction 7A may be needed to cope with the proposed eastern expansion.

Question 24 – What is your view on the Consultant’s recommendations regarding Option D?

This is again unacceptable to this Council because of the impact to the south.

Any further comments?

If a substantial part of the southern allocation could be re-located to the east, this could be a reasonable option from this Council’s perspective. The northern distribution, and the readjusted eastern total, would be likely to require road infrastructure.

Question 25 – What is your view on the Consultant’s recommendations regarding Option E?

The Council agrees with the consultants that this option is liable to lead to settlement coalescence with Roydon, which is wholly unacceptable.

Any further comments?

Question 26 – What is your view on the Consultant’s Suggested Approach to accommodating growth around Harlow?

This addresses most of this Council’s environmental concerns, but there are still potential problems with the southern ridge line. The south and west allocations are not strongly related to Harlow’s town centre, the main employment sites or the railway station, so this could increase car commuting.

Any further comments?

Question 27 – Do you have any other comments on the approach to growth around Harlow?

As mentioned in some answers above, there is concern that only one growth option is being presented for consultation. Other reasonable alternatives should be considered, to satisfy the requirements of PPS12. There is a need for joint or co-ordinated working at Member as well as officer level, and this should encompass the two County Councils as well as the adjoining authorities.

Question 28 – Do you think all the key elements of infrastructure necessary to support the emerging Core Strategy have been identified?

No

Question 29 – If no, what additional infrastructure do you think is needed to support the emerging Core Strategy?

The infrastructure needs of the adjoining authorities should be considered in the context of the urban extensions.

Question 30 – Please rank, in order of priority, how Harlow Council should tackle Harlow’s congestion problems (1 = highest priority, 9 = lowest priority)

	Priority								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Encourage use of public transport for work and leisure (Travel Planning)									
Improve access to the town centre by sustainable modes of transport (cycle / bus)									
Improve connections from Harlow to the Strategic Road Network (M11, A414)									
Improve walking and cycling routes within the town									
Manage future parking provision across the town									
Measures to improve traffic flow along strategic routes and at roundabouts within the town									
Public transport improvements									
Rail enhancements									
Other (please state below)									

Officers propose not to answer this question.

Other:

Question 31 – Do you have any further comments to make, at this stage, on how Harlow should be developed?

- (a) there is a need for joint or co-ordinated working at officer and Member level of all the authorities, including the two County Councils;
- (b) The Options consultation needs to include other reasonable alternatives; and
- (c) the RSS targets and assumptions need to be re-examined, to establish whether the target of 16,000 homes is the right figure.

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