

Why is the Tendring/Colchester Borders Garden Community needed?

North Essex has seen significant increases in its population – and this is predicted to continue rising in the future.

To meet the demand for new homes, Colchester and Tendring have a legal requirement from central Government to meet ambitious housing delivery targets.

We have looked at all potential options for supporting these additional homes, including continuing to expand existing towns and villages.

However, this approach has historically seen new homes built without the necessary expansion of local services to support the needs of the new residents. This also negatively impacts on the quality of life for the existing residents, as well as new ones.

Expanding current villages and towns also pushes new residents away from existing centres, encouraging them to drive to access shops, leisure facilities and places of work.

A new Garden Community gives us the chance to change this in the future by developing a community around the new schools, health facilities, and job opportunities.

The new development could also help with issues we are currently facing – including congestion. As part of the plans for the Garden Community we are looking to develop a Rapid Transit System, potentially a trackless tram, which will improve connectivity and relieve congestion for everyone living, working and visiting in the area.

Other examples include the creation of job opportunities, new areas of open space for everyone to enjoy, and specially managed areas of natural space to support wildlife.

If the proposals for the Garden Community are not taken forward, then the homes needed for North Essex will still need to be built and lots of additional sites will need to be found.

The Tendring/Colchester Borders Garden Community, which would involve the provision of up to 7,500 - 9,000 homes (to be built over many years), is part of a long-term vision of Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council in partnership with Essex County Council to help meet the future growth of the area in a more strategic way.

Isn't this Garden Community just another name for a new housing development?

Absolutely not, and we are committed to delivering a quality new community, embracing the Garden City approach and principles, as a way of meeting the Government's housing targets in a sustainable way.

This involves an approach where we have more of a say in design and developing the services and facilities needed to support the new homes. This new approach would see us, working with other public and private sector bodies, to create sustainable development backed by robust plans, ensuring high quality.

We will produce a Development Plan Document (DPD) for the Garden Community, containing policies setting out how the new community will be designed, developed and delivered in phases, in accordance with our key principles. No planning consent for development forming part of the Garden Community will be granted until the DPD has been adopted.

These principles will include things such as community and stakeholder engagement; ensuring the timely delivery of both on-site and off-site infrastructure; the highest quality of

planning and design; balanced and inclusive housing needs (including a mix of dwelling sizes, tenures and types); provision for Gypsies and Travellers; 30% affordable housing; opportunities for employment; sustainable transport systems; climate resilience; net gains in local biodiversity, highest standards of energy efficiency and innovation in technology; innovative water efficiency/reuse measures; and establishing a long term governance and stewardship arrangements for community assets, including green space.

What Makes a Garden Community Different?

A Garden Community is a planned new community which will be a sustainable and attractive place to live, work and visit for all.

The principles behind a Garden Community is that it is infrastructure-led and this is something we are committed to. This means all the essential facilities and services – like schools, health services, roads and transport systems, and jobs – would all be available as the community grows.

This is instead of the normal method of continually adding housing developments to our urban areas without the necessary infrastructure or only limited expansion of existing services and facilities. This approach detrimentally impacts our residents. Importantly, the Garden Community will not result in any additional new homes that would not otherwise be built in the area.

To further develop the community feel, residents will have the chance to have a say on the management and maintenance of open spaces and other community facilities within the development.

Community engagement is key to any Garden Community which is why residents from existing settlements will also have the opportunity to have a say on key issues as development takes place.

What will be the big differences living in a Garden Community to living on a new housing estate now?

The Garden Community will be built to the highest design standards, with plenty of green space.

People will have the choice as to how they want to travel around the area. While obviously they could have their own cars, they will also have access to safe and attractive walking and cycling routes, world class public transport and latest green technology supporting electric vehicles close to their homes.

Importantly, through the long-term stewardship of community assets such as green spaces and commercial buildings, residents will have a say over their community and will have a powerful voice in how they are run.

The key aim of the Garden Community is to create high quality environments where communities thrive.

The Garden Community will be designed with jobs close by which are easily accessible, and also promote the move towards increasing home working with superfast broadband.

Ultimately therefore, Garden Communities are all about raising the quality of life of residents.

Will there be more open space in the Garden Community?

A significant amount of the new Garden Community is to be open space, which is far greater than traditional developments.

This open space will take a number of forms including recreational areas, sports facilities, play areas and new nature reserves.

Isn't there enough brownfield land for new housing?

Given the scale of the housing challenge, not just locally but nationally, we need to develop both brownfield and greenfield sites.

We have an exceptional record of prioritising brownfield land for residential developments, but this has led to most of this previously developed land running out.

What will be the impact on the environment of the Garden Community?

There is a challenge in providing new homes, while also protecting our precious wildlife and beautiful countryside.

However, recent developments in the UK and abroad have shown new developments can improve the environment, reduce carbon emissions and improve local biodiversity. There are significant opportunities to learn from these developments including embracing the latest innovations in housing designs as well as exploring how renewable energy can be captured and reused at the Garden Community.

It is now a national requirement to ensure all new development results in a 'net gain' of biodiversity. However, the Garden Community presents an opportunity for us to go far beyond the bare minimum, for example by transforming large areas of agricultural land into 'rewilded' woodland and other natural habitats.

We have policies set out to ensure that design and infrastructure for the Garden Community will incorporate the highest standards of innovation in energy efficiency and technology to reduce the impact of climate change, ensure water efficiency, and implement sustainable waste / recycling management facilities.

We will ensure the new development does not have an adverse effect on any European Protected or nationally important site and that it complies with environmental legislation.

Is there enough water to sustain this Garden Community?

Yes, the water companies will supply water to sustain the Garden Community and future development elsewhere in North Essex. Water companies are required to prepare Water Resource Management Plans (WRMP) at least once every 5 years to set out how water supply will be managed to meet current and future needs over a minimum period of 25 years.

How will waste water be dealt with?

Anglian Water, as sewerage undertaker, is responsible for funding any required investment to ensure that capacity is made available at water recycling centres in time to serve development in the company area. Anglian Water have prepared a Water Recycling Long Term Plan (WRLTP) which outlines the planned investment at both existing water recycling centres and sewerage network to accommodate development to 2045.

What will be the impact on other established communities?

We are keen to protect the identity of established communities which is why we are promoting a Garden Community and not scattered uncoordinated development. We will

ensure those residents are consulted and informed throughout the development of the new community.

The Garden Community will be surrounded with green areas while new roads, footpaths, cycleways and a Rapid Transit System will connect surrounding areas to the new settlements to enable everyone to benefit from the new development. Existing communities will be able to benefit from the enhanced community facilities and open spaces provided by the Garden Community.

Will there be more council and affordable housing within the Garden Community?

We have set out in policy our intent that a minimum of 30% of new housing in the Garden Community to be classed as affordable (including the potential for more social housing) by the Government's definition. The affordable housing will be phased through the development.

Additionally, there is an opportunity to build new housing for specific groups such as older people and people with disabilities.

This Garden Community will provide a truly balanced and inclusive community. We will make sure it meets the housing needs of local people including a mix of dwelling sizes, tenures and types, provision for self- and custom-built homes, provision for the aging population, and provision for Gypsies and Travellers.

What public transport comes with Garden Communities?

The Garden Community will be served by innovative public transport including a Rapid Transit System (RTS) connecting the new development with Colchester and onward destinations. The RTS has been made possible thanks to a successful Housing Infrastructure Fund bid, submitted by Essex County Council.

Additional transport facilities will include the provision of a network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways to enhance sustainable transport options and link in with the wider strategic and local road network.

Will the new A120/A133 link road be in place before the house building starts?

Absolutely. We are committed to the 'infrastructure first' approach. The condition of the road funding we successfully secured requires that it is built on a tight timetable, so it will be delivered during 2024, in time for people to move into the first homes.

Won't the new A120/A133 'split' the Garden Community?

The new link road is a vital part of our commitment to 'infrastructure first'. Such an important transport provision is crucial for the Garden Community and wider area. Whilst masterplanning is yet to be undertaken, one of the rationales for selecting the chosen route is that it aligns best with the initial conceptual idea for the route to be located towards the eastern side of the Garden Community. Primary points of connection from the Link Road to the Garden Community will be through a series of roundabouts.

When will the proposed Rapid Transit System be available?

In August 2019 the Government awarded £30million from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) towards the first phase of the Rapid Transit Scheme (RTS). This will be used to develop a route through Colchester from the Park and Ride in North Colchester through the Town Centre and onward to the Garden Community. The route through the Garden

Community will be agreed through the planning process and will allow for accessibility to the scheme from the very start of the delivery of new housing. We are ambitious as to the use of new technology for the RTS and a modern tram-style system is our aspiration as soon as it can be delivered.

Clingoe Hill is already struggling with the current amount of traffic – how is it expected to cope with additional traffic from additional homes?

There are significant amounts of traffic in several areas across the borough of Colchester and there are a number of ways of helping to ease this.

Firstly, the new link road will help motorists to get directly onto the A120 and A12 via the new link road, avoiding coming into Colchester.

Then there is the Rapid Transit System, which alongside the increasing use of other alternatives to the private car, will provide an alternative attractive means of travelling into Colchester and beyond.

Finally, the new Garden Community developments would encourage the majority of journeys to be within the new sites themselves, reducing the need to travel further.

Will the trees along the Avenue of Remembrance in Colchester have to be removed to ensure it can cope with any additional traffic?

While we still need to develop the details of any routes for the Rapid Transit System it is important that the route is segregated.

However, we fully recognise the importance of the trees along Remembrance Avenue.

Where will shops, schools and medical facilities be sited and when will they be available?

Essential services such as shops, schools and medical facilities will be located within neighbourhood centres throughout the Garden Community and will be available to serve the community in line with its growth.

Importantly, these facilities will be delivered on a phase by phase basis, ensuring that new homes are built with the infrastructure to support them. This means as the community grows, so will the infrastructure provided to support it.

Won't pressure be put on existing schools and medical facilities until new ones are built?

Planning policies require that supporting infrastructure for the Garden Community is phased alongside development to ensure capacity keeps up with demand. Some larger facilities such as secondary schools require larger catchment areas to warrant opening. In these instances, we will work with infrastructure providers such as Essex County Council to ensure expansion of adjacent existing facilities as required prior to demand for a new facility reaching critical mass. Education and health providers have a statutory requirement to meet needs and are continually exploring new delivery methods to address this demand such as increased use of digital communication and shared multi-purpose community facilities.

Where will the money come from to pay for the infrastructure and facilities?

The infrastructure and facilities will be paid for through a range of different methods.

Major pieces of infrastructure needed to support the Garden Community will be funded through central Government. For example, through the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund almost £100million has been given to us to build the A120/A133 link road for the Garden Community and to develop the Rapid Transit System in that part of the town.

Any surplus made through land sales and housing developments would also be used to support the provision of facilities and services supporting the new development. The certainty of new housing receipts in the future will ensure that this infrastructure can be funded up front.

Where will the new jobs be?

Employment opportunities will be located in the Garden Community in specially designed areas, as well as mixed in with residential areas. As and when we agree deals with businesses, this will be communicated.

Planning mixed use areas encourages increased social interaction and reduces the need for people to drive to get to day to day facilities such as schools and shops. Additionally, the Covid-19 pandemic has introduced fundamental shifts to working patterns that can be expected to result in lasting increases to home working and the need for supporting services in nearby centres. The Garden Community model is well-suited to support these new ways of working and we will provide high speed and reliable broadband to enable this.

The Garden Community is well located, with the University of Essex nearby as well as international gateways with Stansted Airport and the ports at Harwich and Felixstowe along the A120 corridor.

We will allocate 25 hectares of employment land within the Garden Community and economic assessments have shown the equivalent of one job per new home built in the Garden Community is achievable.

What happens next?

A project team from all three authorities has now been assembled. The priority now is to start the preparation work in order to produce the *Development Plan Document (DPD) over the next two years or so. This DPD will be produced with input from stakeholders and the community. An Engagement and Consultation strategy will outline how we will do this. We expect to launch this strategy by the end of the year (2020).

*A Development Plan Document is prepared by local planning authorities and outlines the key development goals of the local development framework. Once adopted, development control decisions must be made in accordance with them unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

What are 'Garden Community Principles'?

There are ten Garden Community principles. These are

- Principle 1 - Green Infrastructure

The Garden Community will provide a generous amount of green space. It will be set within a multi-functional and integrated natural environment; providing space for nature, making the

communities more resilient to climate change; promoting healthy lifestyles, and creating beautiful places to live and work.

- Principle 2 - Integrated and Sustainable Transport

The Garden Community will be planned around a step change in an integrated and sustainable transport system for the North Essex area, putting walking, cycling and public transit systems at the heart of the development. These will be delivered in a timely way to support the community as it grows.

- Principle 3 - Employment Opportunity

The Garden Community will seek to provide access to one job per household within the new community or within a short distance by public transport. This will be a key component of creating character and identity and sustainable communities.

- Principle 4 - Living Environment

Walkable, sociable and vibrant neighbourhoods will be a defining characteristic of the Garden Community. A diverse mix of homes responding to existing and future local needs will be provided alongside a range of community services, including health, education, leisure and recreation, culture and shopping.

- Principle 5 – Smart and Sustainable Living

Planned for the 21st Century, the Garden Community will secure a smart and sustainable approach fostering resilient environments and communities able to respond positively to changing circumstances. Innovation and technology will be embraced to achieve a higher quality of life and healthier lifestyles; creating the conditions for sustainable living.

- Principle 6 - Good Design

Through all stages of the planning, design and development of the Garden Community the highest quality of design and management of the built and public realm will be promoted. Existing local assets will be capitalised to help create distinctive places.

- Principle 7 - Community Engagement

The Garden Community is a locally-led initiative, and its development will be shaped through engaging existing communities and emerging new communities; residents will be empowered to contribute to shaping the future of their area.

- Principle 8 - Active Local Stewardship

The Garden Community will be developed and managed in perpetuity with the direct involvement of its residents and businesses; residents will be directly engaged in the long-term management and stewardship, fostering a shared sense of ownership and identity.

- Principle 9 - Strong Corporate & Political Public Leadership

Colchester and Tendring Councils will collaborate to provide a clear vision for the Garden Community and commitment to its long-term success. Central to this will be a commitment to high quality placemaking, timely infrastructure provision, and achieving a steady pace of housing and employment delivery.

- Principle 10 - Innovative Delivery Structure

The Garden Community will be delivered through a genuine and pro-active partnership approach between the public and private sectors, where risk and reward are shared and community empowerment enabled.