HS5.2

TENDRING COLCHESTER BORDERS GARDEN COMMUNITY

REGULATION 19 SUBMISSION DRAFT

Examination in Public

Main Matter 5 – Economic Activity and Employment (GC Policy 5: Economic Activity and Employment

Statement prepared on behalf of the University of Essex

April 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Statement has been prepared on behalf of the University of Essex in respect of Main Matter 5 – Economic Activity and Employment (GC Policy 5).

1.2 The University made representations at the Regulation 17, 18 and 19 stages, but considers it necessary to submit this further Statement, and appear at the Examination, in order to personally make its case, as the policy/strategy that is being pursued by the Councils fundamentally threatens its expansion plans which are, purportedly, supported by both Councils.

1.3 The University maintains the position that the Draft Plan is 'unsound' as it fails to deliver a number of the objectives set out in Policies SP8 and SP9 of the Colchester City Local Plan 2013-2033, North Essex Authorities Shared Strategic Section 1 Plan (Document PD6), under which it is being produced. The University's position is set out in the following documents: -

- Its representations to the Regulation 18 Draft.
- Further clarifications submitted at the request of the Councils in August 2022.
- Its representations to the Regulation 19 Draft.

1.3 The above documents should be read in conjunction with this Statement and will be referred to throughout. Reference will also be made, as necessary, to: -

- the Statement of Common Ground that the University has agreed with the Councils (Document SCG04); and
- the Statement of Common Ground agreed with Latimer (Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community) Developments Ltd, which has the controlling land interest in, and is the master developer for, the Garden Community.

2. ARE THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE POLICY JUSTIFIED BY APPROPRIATE EVIDENCE, HAVING REGARD TO NATIONAL GUIDANCE, AND LOCAL CONTEXT.

2.1 The University of Essex, as expressed in its Regulation 18 and 19 representations, supports the principles underlying the Garden Community and generally supports the quantum and spatial allocation of employment-related development. It does, however, have a number of concerns about the detail of GC Policy 5.

2.2 For the reasons set out in the University's Regulation 18 and 19 representations and, in particular, the clarification information submitted in August 22, the University is of the view that, in order to maximise the potential of research-related employment links with, and in order to best exploit the strengths of, the University, the Knowledge Based Employment Land allocation should be closer to 12 hectares, as opposed to the 8 hectares currently identified. The allocation should be increased in size in order to achieve the Councils' aspirations.

2.3 More importantly, the new allocation needs to be as close as possible to the existing Knowledge Gateway in order to, as is identified in the Quod Economic and Employment Study (December 2022) (Page 35) (Document EB15), create the necessary degree of connectivity for operators and employees of both new businesses and between new businesses and the existing Knowledge Gateway and University Campus.

2.4 The Wisher Report (Document EB16), whilst supporting the Council's allocation of 8 hectares, also concludes (paragraph 3.16) that, *"…. the need for adjacency and integration with the existing Knowledge Gateway is paramount".*

2.5 The University is concerned that the 'allocation' as shown on the Policies Map fails to achieve this objective. The Knowledge Based Employment Land allocation is shown as

extending approximately I km along the north side of the A133 (and as being approximately 100m deep). Such a long strip of ribbon development will make it unviable for businesses to establish the levels of connectivity required to make a success of their own operations and to support the development of a thriving business and research community as a whole.

2.6 The allocation, as shown on the Policies Map, has little relationship to the existing Knowledge Gateway land or the University. As a result, the Policies Map is not consistent with either draft GC Policy 5 or the Council's own evidence base.

Employment Opportunities at the University

2.7 All parties accept that one of the principal reasons why the Part 1 Examination Inspectors recommended that this Garden Community should proceed (whilst striking out the two other proposals that were before them) is because of the presence of the University of Essex and the Knowledge Gateway and the employment opportunities that they currently provide, together with those that they will generate if they can achieve their growth plans. The growth potential of the University of Essex and Knowledge Gateway was critical to the Garden Community being proposed for development and will be critical to its success.

2.8 The University has expressed its concerns about the soundness of the draft TCBGC DPD and, in particular, the Council's spatial approach and failure to make a specific allocation for University expansion, to include the provision of priority student accommodation. The Council's approach will stifle opportunities for ongoing growth at the University's Colchester Campus and unless amendments are made to the DPD, the University will need to realise its growth aspirations at its other Campuses.

2.9 The University has made its position clear through its Regulation 17, 18 & 19 representations. It is, therefore, disappointed that the Councils have not commissioned any work to assess the impact that the University's inability to meet its growth targets would have upon the employment opportunities available to the residents of the Garden Community and, as a result, the phasing of the Garden Community and the prospects of it being successful.

2.10 It is noted, in this respect, that the authors of the Quod Report were not asked to consider what the ramifications would be, for the Garden Community, of the University not achieving its growth objectives. This is despite the fact that the Quod Report acknowledges that: -

> '*The Authorities are committed to exploring available opportunities for them to promote investment, support pioneer tenants and work with existing economic anchors, particularly the University, to deliver employment floor space to create jobs for new and existing residents, drive skilled development and support the growth of Essex University's spin-out and innovation potential. They want to ensure that economic aspirations are evenly weighted with housing, as part of a comprehensive Garden Community based around 'connected' living and to meet the objective of one new job within a reasonable commuting distance of every new home.* (Paragraph 1.4)
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> *The most likely source of office (or office/research and development mixed space) will be university linked growth spin-offs from the Knowledge Gateway or expansion of the Gateway itself. The University has ambitious aspirations for growth in its student numbers and its commercial activities. Whilst this will not lead to an immediate significant demand for more land (as their current landholding already has some room to grow), the University-linked growth is expected to play a key part in driving demand for commercial space at TCBGC in the long term, and exciting opportunities for capturing growth in the new, innovative sectors.* (Paragraph 1.22)

21 A failure to even consider the implications that may arise from policies (or the absence of policies) that frustrate the growth of the University and, therefore, the contribution that it can make to driving demand for commercial space at TCBGC, is a clear and obvious omission in the evidence base.