

19th February 2016

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Dear Glenn

London-Stansted-Cambridge Corridor (LSCC) Growth Commission – call for evidence

I am pleased to provide this submission to the LSCC Growth Commission in response to the ‘call for evidence’ relating to the potential and challenges facing the Corridor. The submission is made by Boyer on behalf of CEG and Hallam Land Ltd and provides evidence for the Commission to consider in relation to the potential opportunities and challenges associated with the future growth of Harlow.

South Harlow has significant potential to contribute towards the regeneration of the town and to meet future needs, whilst contributing to the long term ambitions of the corridor. The submission is intended to help to inform the Interim Report being produced by the Commission.

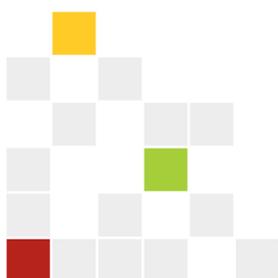
A further submission will also be provided in relation to the competitive location, priorities and solutions for sustainable growth and prosperity by 13 May 2016.

Understanding potential

The strengths, opportunities and challenges of Harlow are well documented. Harlow provides a range of services and facilities as well as housing and employment opportunities. The town has good rail links to London, Stansted Airport and Cambridge. To the east of the town is the M11 motorway which is a key north-south route linking London to Cambridge and beyond. The M25 (3 miles to the south of Harlow) provides access to other parts of London and the wider south east. Epping Forest District adjoins the town to the south, east and west while East Hertfordshire District lies to the north.

Harlow has traditionally been a good location for manufacturing and industrial businesses. Harlow is also home to one of 24 Enterprise Zones set up across England in 2011 to promote business growth and job creation. The Enterprise Zone’s aims and objectives reflect Harlow’s wider economic growth aspirations for the town which seek to boost economic growth, diversify the economic base and to capitalise on the town’s proximity to the Cambridge and London economies and connections to rest of the UK and beyond.

Harlow experiences a number of challenges, including industrial decline and localised deprivation. Harlow’s town centre and housing require regeneration, the infrastructure needs upgrading and new businesses are required to provide for employment needs. Recognising this, the Government has recently announced £50 million of improvements to Junction 7 of the M11 in order to make development easier and provide quicker access to and from the town.



The latest evidence indicates that the objectively assessed housing need for the housing market area of West Essex / East Herts is 46,100 net additional dwellings over the period 2011-2033. Population projections indicate that the population of Harlow is expected to increase by over 14,000 over the same period. Harlow requires strategically planned growth to meet the future housing and employment needs of the town, and to provide for a sustainable future.

Barriers to success

The administrative area of Harlow itself cannot accommodate its own needs. It is likely that between 12,000 and 15,000 new homes will need to be planned for to meet the needs of Harlow up to 2033, but only approximately 6,000 of those can be accommodated within the town itself. In addition, between 8,000 and 12,000 new jobs are required. Therefore, there is a need to look beyond the boundaries of Harlow to ensure that the future development and infrastructure needs of the town will be met.

The future growth of Harlow beyond its existing boundaries is constrained by a number of natural features and planning designations. The town is surrounded by the Green Belt and a number of important ecological sites. The floodplain of the River Stort lies to the north and landscape ridges surround the town.

Under the National Planning Policy Framework and the Duty to Cooperate, Harlow Council is required to work with its neighbouring local planning authorities (Epping Forest District Council, East Hertfordshire District Council and Uttlesford District Council) to ensure that the emerging Local Plans for the respective areas are coordinated and can collectively plan to meet the needs of the wider area. This includes planning for additional needs arising from Harlow that cannot be accommodated within the administrative area of Harlow alone. Therefore, it effectively means that Harlow and its neighbouring local authorities need to agree on allocations to meet the needs of the town through development in adjoining areas, where practical and deliverable options are limited.

This poses considerable difficulties for each of the local authorities in progressing Local Plans, because unless formal agreement can be reached on how growth needs will be met, then individual Local Plans are highly unlikely to pass Examination-in-Public and will be incapable of formal adoption by the Councils. Until the situation is resolved, it creates considerable uncertainty as to how the future needs of Harlow are to be met, and effectively results in a 'policy vacuum'. This in turn delays the implementation of much needed development and investment in the town which is required to enable sustainable growth and regeneration. There is still a considerable way to go to resolve discussions between local authorities and finalise respective Local Plans. There is no certainty at the current time as to when the situation will be resolved.

Building potential

South Harlow provides a practical and deliverable option to contribute significantly towards the growth potential of Harlow and the LSCC. The area has the potential to deliver sustainable growth and significant benefits to the Corridor in a highly accessible location close to junction 7 of the M11. South Harlow was first identified as a potential expansion area for Harlow in 1963, following Gibberd's vision and principles for the expansion of the Town.

Latton Priory is located along the northern boundary of Epping Forest and the southern edge of Harlow and would form a logical and sustainable extension to the town. The site is 250 hectares and is bounded by significant areas of woodland and open space. These belts of deciduous woodland and the rolling landscape create an opportunity for a contained development area and provide a sense of enclosure within the landscape. The minimum 2.4 mile distances between Harlow and Epping/North Weald protect against coalescence and retain the integrity of the rural Epping landscape.

The site has the potential to deliver sustainable growth and significant benefits to the Corridor through the provision of a flagship business park up to 15ha in size, a high quality mix of 2,250 new homes, new community facilities and improvements to the M11. The business park has the potential to generate 3,000 new jobs, which will help the town to maintain competitiveness as a business location. The development would provide much needed new places to live and work of the highest standards, set within extensive areas of open space, allotments and parks. The site sits within a strong green framework and offers a series of physical links and connections to Harlow. These would interlink with the existing and established 'green wedges' that are characteristic of Harlow's layout and design.

Development at Latton Priory could contribute up to £10 million investment into strategic highways improvements including junction 7A of the M11, together with a range of local road improvements. In addition, there would be significant investment into new services and facilities, together with substantial regenerative benefits for south Harlow.

Latton Priory would embody sustainable growth through the provision of much needed housing and employment at a strategically important site, well related to an existing hub. The site offers regeneration and investment opportunities, including improvements to the M11, which would make the Corridor more attractive to business. High quality housing would draw new talent into the area.

Latton Priory has been promoted for a number of years, and continues to await allocation within emerging Local Plans. The site can contribute significantly to meeting the future development and infrastructure needs of Harlow and Epping Forest, located centrally within the wider Corridor. The failure of the Councils to reach an agreement on the allocation is currently delaying the delivery of much needed sustainable growth to meet the needs of the local and wider area.

Delivering change

The progression of the Local Plans in Harlow, Epping Forest and East Hertfordshire is critical to unlocking the potential of Harlow. The town needs to be revitalised and to grow, and this will require joint working between public sector agencies and the private sector. Difficult decisions must be taken to provide the much needed certainty as to how the town will grow and cater for future needs. This will allow for much needed growth plans to be implemented. Until that happens, Harlow will continue to stand still, and future needs will remain unaccounted for.

Latton Priory can play a major role in addressing some of the challenges facing Harlow and the wider corridor. CEG and Hallam Land would welcome the opportunity to further consider with the Commission how the future growth needs of Harlow can be met, and the opportunities and potential of the town be realised.

Yours sincerely



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