

COLNE

# Forward

The purpose of this guidance is to set out criteria for the future development of the area known as 'the Hythe' in East Colchester.

It has been prepared and adopted in accordance with the advice set out in PPG 12 in relation to "Supplementary Planning Guidance".

The guidance expands upon the strategy, policies and proposals, contained in the 2nd. Deposit Draft of the Colchester Borough Local Plan.

The overall strategy of the local plan is to promote sustainability, based on mixed-use developments, and urban regeneration from the re-use of "brownfield" sites. In addition, the plan also seeks to promote the local economy, protect and improve both the natural and built environments, and support local communities.

The Hythe area is highlighted in the local plan as a priority area for environmental, economic, and social regeneration. Its problems have resulted from the severe economic downturn of Colchester port, leading to its consequential closure and the loss of many traditional local businesses associated with it. The local environment has also degenerated badly as a result, with large areas of vacant, derelict, and polluted land. The river itself is also becoming badly silted and has become virtually unused.

Finally there are relatively high levels of social deprivation East Colchester.

This supplementary planning guidance closely follows the strategic objectives of the local plan, and is particularly aimed at promoting the necessary urban regeneration throughout the Hythe and beyond, by the creation of mixed-use, high-quality natural and built environments. Its prime focus is the area identified in chapter 16 of the local plan as "the River Colne Regeneration Area" (RA), covered by policies ECH1, ECH2, 2a, 2b, 2c, and ECH5.

The local plan policies set overall land use and environmental criteria for the RA, with more detailed requirements for specific areas within it. It also sets out a list of infrastructure requirements (Table 8) which will be sought through developments, either by direct provision or by appropriate financial contributions. This guidance sets out more detailed criteria for a number of these requirements.

These criteria, together with the local plan policies, will be used in determining planning applications within the Hythe inset area.

Colchester Borough Council  
January 2001

# COLNE HARBOUR DESIGN FRAMEWORK

This framework has been produced for the Colne Harbour Project Group on behalf of the Colchester Economic Forum.



This document has been produced by  
Essex County Council,  
Planning Division,  
Improvement Action &  
Urban Design Group.  
January 2001

The valuable assistance of the  
Colne Harbour Group is gratefully  
acknowledged;

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Chair of the Colne Harbour Group  
Robin Webb  
Robin Webb Consulting Engineers  
Richard Bailey, Fenn Wright  
Ian Mosley, Stanley Bragg Architects  
Bertrum Rope, PR consultant

In addition to the above, we have discussed the project at length with Members and Officers of Colchester Borough Council, The Colchester Economic Forum, site owners, developers, funders and environmental groups. To these people, too numerous to mention individually, we also extend our thanks.

The Colne harbour logo was designed by  
Richard Allen

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# The Design Strategy

The economies of many towns and cities in Europe have been transformed within a generation. Industries, which once were the lifeblood of the community, have closed, often leaving large areas of land vacant and contaminated. Locations on the edge of the town centre with inadequate access and an adjacent community that is disadvantaged in a variety of ways, are also common features.

Whereas pressure for urban growth has been met in the past principally by the release of agricultural land, planning strategies are now looking at derelict and under utilised sites within towns to meet these needs. Re-using 'brownfield' land has various advantages but is often a more expensive option for developers. However, comprehensive plans for regeneration, risk sharing and investment in public infrastructure can sometimes be sufficient to balance this out.

Urban Design Frameworks are just one tool for establishing a coherent strategy for regeneration. They can promote the way in which urban areas may best serve the interests of the community and guide investors to politically and economically viable proposals. They can also establish connections between those people and organisations that shape and use our built-up areas and this can be an invaluable resource for the next stage; implementation.

## Mission Statement

The purpose of this Design Framework is to guide development in East Colchester in a manner that brings maximum benefit to the town and to the people who will one-day live, work in and visit Colne Harbour. A primary objective is to secure economic regeneration<sup>1</sup>.

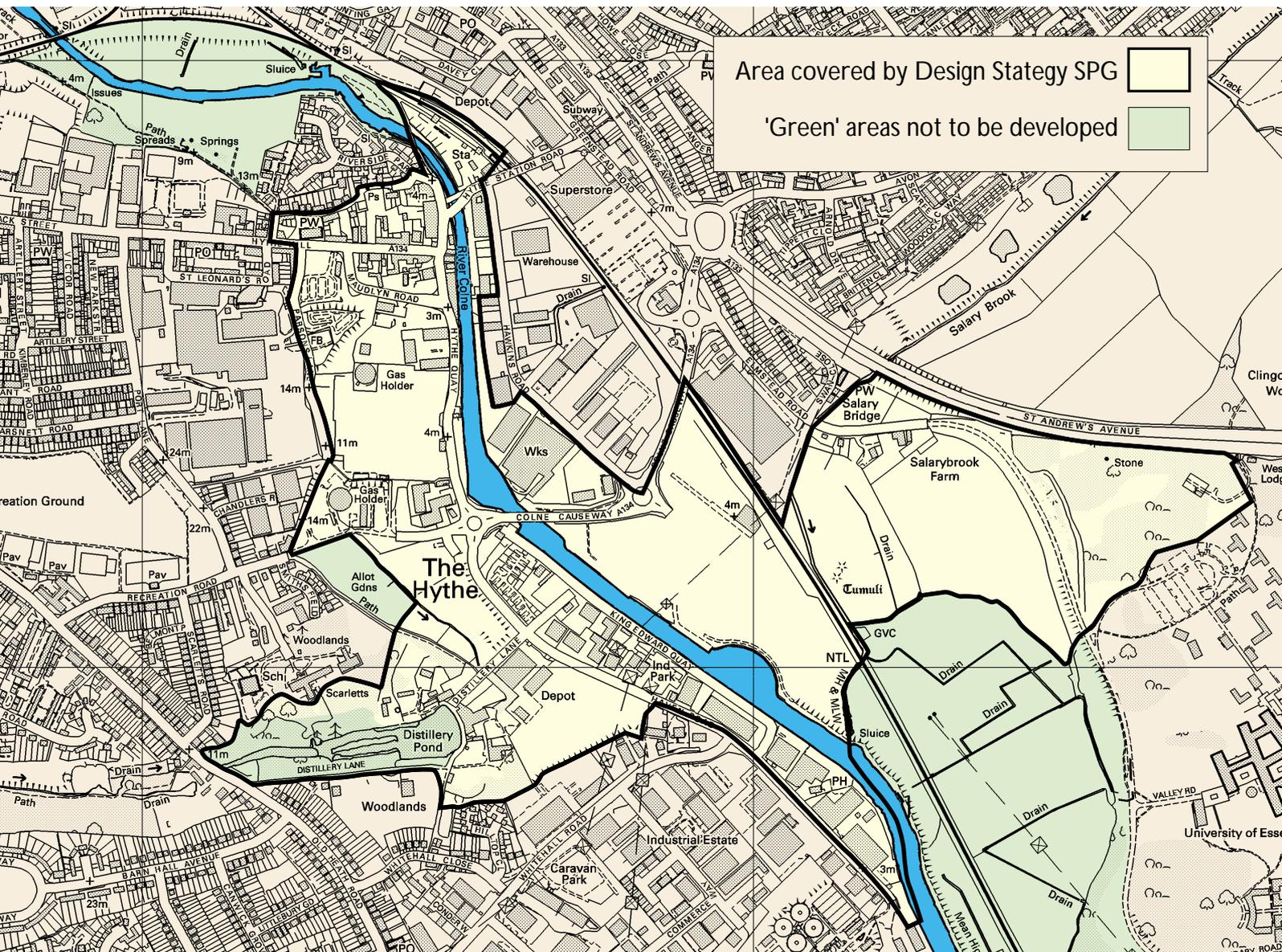
The framework enables the emergence of sustainable, mixed-use neighbourhoods focused on the river. These will evolve into a new corridor of investment that redefines the eastern gateway into the town.

*'I just hate the way architects and city planners and everyone else responsible for urban life seem to have lost sight of what cities are for. They are for people. That seems obvious enough, but for over half a century we have been building cities that are for almost everything else; for cars, for businesses, for developers, for people with money and bold visions who refuse to see cities from ground level, as places in which people must live and function and get around. We used to build civilisations. Now we build shopping malls.'*

B.Bryson, Neither Here or There

<sup>1</sup> The Design Framework is intended to facilitate the delivery of an integrated programme of initiatives that will mobilise resources in a manner that secures benefits and employment for local people. The Framework particularly encourages the establishment of new economic activities within a transformed environment that will help improve social cohesion and quality of life.

The Colne Harbour Design Framework contains design codes that apply to the area shown below. The character of this landscape varies between derelict land, brownfield sites and spaces of high amenity value. There is a presumption against development of these green spaces, also identified on the plan.



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# Mending Colne Harbour

## New Neighbourhoods

Most people live in neighbourhoods. However, recent suburban growth often lacks the same sense of place and the facilities often found within the traditional 19th century neighbourhood. As well as being good places in which to live the Victorian, inner- suburb also provides us with a model for contemporary environmental sustainability where living, work and leisure are often found in close proximity, thereby reducing the necessity to travel outside the area for most daily needs. Many people now recognise the special qualities of these earlier patterns of urban growth and consider them a suitable paradigm for an environmentally sustainable urban future.

There are also other advantages of following the urban neighbourhood model. They are often compact and efficient in their use of land. Space for the car is accommodated where possible, but not at the expense of the tight urban fabric comprising of homes, schools, corner shops and places of work.

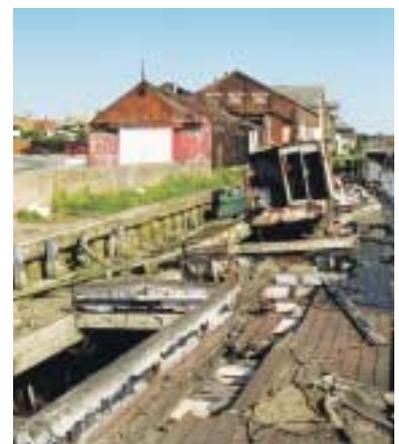
Spaces between buildings are invariably of a human scale and together with street trees, small parks and squares often combine to create a tangible sense of place. New Town, which lies adjacent to the Colne Harbour area, retains many of these qualities.

An objective of this framework is to guide the development of the underused or vacant land along the River Colne at Hythe in a way that helps reproduce the best qualities of this type of neighbourhood. However, a single new neighbourhood at Colne Harbour would be too large to possess a coherent character and encourage walking as transport. It is also possible that the identity of the existing Hythe community would be swamped in the process.

Therefore, it is proposed that the Hythe neighbourhood be improved by selective development and an entirely new neighbourhood be built adjacent to the university and the river.



Colne Harbour tomorrow?



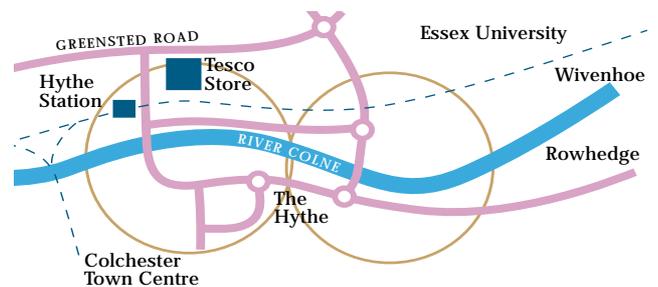
Colne Harbour today

*“Take away the high concentration of people and activities, together with the diversity and vitality which go with them and there’s no longer any point in living in the city”.*

H. Sherlock, Cities Are Good For Us (1991)

## Code MEN1

◆ Improve the urban character and viability of the Hythe neighbourhood (including the conservation area) and create a new, adjoining neighbourhood at the University.



The neighbourhood centres will need movement to feed them yet only an abundance of people can generate sufficient demand to make public transport, small businesses, local services and commercial investment viable. Providing essential infrastructure is a pre-requisite of achieving this.

## Code MEN2

◆ Each of the new neighbourhoods shall have a local centre where the following facilities will be located;

- A railway station
- A bus interchange
- A range of uses and activities that serve the needs of the community

## The River

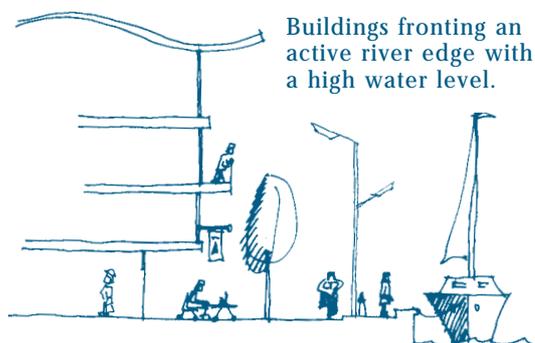
Since Roman times, the River Colne has been the source of trade for the people of Colchester. Whilst the need for river transport ceased with the effective closure of port, the river retains its symbolic significance as Colchester's link to the sea and beyond. However, years of neglect have left the harbour in poor condition and the river has become a dumping ground for shopping trolleys and used tyres. For much of the day this detritus is visible along with the 4 hectares of mud.

Just as some towns have started to make better use of brownfield land, others have rediscovered their waterfronts. Often the two go hand in hand.

Water can be an attraction for people and investment when it is well presented. But to be successful, the river must be able to accommodate boats and activities that generate visual interest and life throughout the day. A transformed river where a high water level is maintained that covers the mud is one of the keys to the economic rejuvenation of this area. Whereas buildings and uses have hitherto backed onto the river, the challenge now is to change this relationship so that the river becomes the stage for a variety of uses, activities and events and a vital setting for a new urban riverscape. There are no other places within Colchester where this is possible.

### Code MEN3

◆ A barrage shall be constructed across the River Colne to retain a high water level. This facility shall also incorporate a lock to allow the passage of pleasure craft to the upper reaches of the Colne.



### Code MEN4

◆ A hard river edge for walking, cycling and access shall be provided between Hythe Bridge and the south eastern limits of development. Sheet piled river walls with a dressed concrete or stone capping is required along this length. However, a river edge that encourages plant colonisation is more appropriate beyond this urban core.

It is essential that buildings that front the river are positioned close to the water's edge and have sufficient height. Overly wide spaces that are not filled with activity tend to be dull and threatening to the pedestrian. However, a variety of relationships should be possible so that some narrow, intimate spaces are designed as well as some broader ones. This helps to achieve an environment that is both visually interesting and capable of accommodating a richer variety of outdoor uses.

The spatial pattern will depend upon and be a response to other factors such as whether or not the space is to be accessed by vehicles, the height and enclosing effect of adjacent buildings and the desirability of creating a few public squares or pocket parks close to the waters' edge.

### Code MEN5

◆ The space between buildings fronting the river and the rivers' edge should for most purposes be 10m wide, although the width of this space could vary along the length of the river. A 10m margin is sufficient to accommodate service vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians.

There will be the occasional opportunity to allow urban squares to adjoin the river. These wider spaces are acceptable provided buildings surround them on 3 sides.



## Links

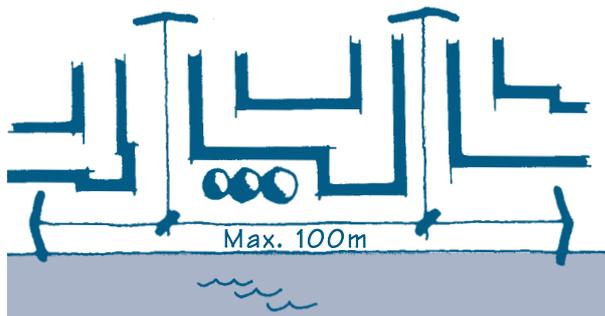
Both the railway and the river tend to act as barriers to free movement. This is undesirable as this limits choice, severs adjacent land and reduces the attractiveness of walking and cycling. It is therefore essential that land and communities are re-connected by the construction and improvement of infrastructure such as footbridges and cycleways.

### Code MEN6

◆ New development located adjacent to the river must be laid out in a way that is permeable to pedestrians, cycles and usually traffic. The objective is to create frequently spaced connections between the river's edge and the hinterland. These routes should be spaced at intervals no greater than every 100m.

Avoid unnecessarily wide paved space adjacent to the river that will not be animated throughout the day.

Also, establish new river and rail crossings that create better links between land either side of the river and railway.



Buildings laid out to create streets that make the area especially permeable for pedestrians and cyclists.

Mixed-use buildings facing water

## Active Frontages

The way in which building frontages are orientated and animated is also important. The linearity of the river should not be challenged yet placing buildings at arbitrary angles at its edge will do this. New development adjacent to the river therefore needs to be laid out in a way that enhances the urban character of the riverside.

### Code MEN7

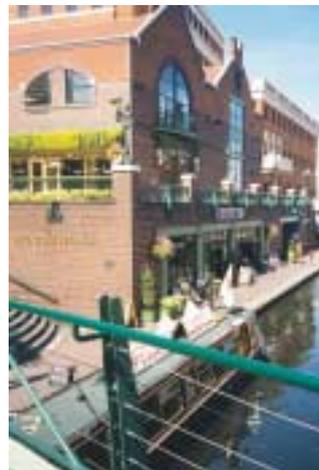
◆ Only buildings with active frontages should face the river. The degree to which this is possible will depend upon the mix of uses within each building. Generally, building frontages facing the river should incorporate frequent entrances from public space (see adaptability code URB11) and windows with occupied rooms behind at street level.

### Code MEN8

◆ New buildings must face the river on an 'orthogonal' or parallel alignment.



Quality development with potential for active, ground floor uses such as cafés and local shops.



# Urban Character

## Quality

Most people would like to live and work in an attractive environment. Others would add that there has to be a commitment to quality and creativity<sup>2</sup>. But presenting a definition of this desire is more problematical. Quality is not just about aesthetics but also encompasses urban form, lifestyle and health. However, a commitment to quality in its broadest sense is essential in order to reinforce our model for sustainable neighbourhoods. Attractive and active places where traffic is tamed also tend to be popular places to visit and to invest.

### Code URB1

◆ A high standard of design that is also appropriate to the context of the site is expected for all developments including the improvement or creation of public space. Proposals that also lie within the Hythe Conservation Area shall be architecturally sympathetic to the surrounding historic character.

### Code URB2

◆ Colchester Borough Council will publish a conservation area appraisal and enhancement scheme for the Hythe Conservation Area. This will show how the visual quality of this area can be improved by the repair, reinstatement and selective redevelopment.

## Mixed-use

Mixed-use is the key to urban vitality. Achieving it is a major challenge as there are many forces that work against it. Funding institutions for instance, tend to be cautious and prefer single-use developments that currently appeal to a wider investor market. Such developments are more straightforward as they are simple to value and easy to manage.

However, the tradition of our best urban areas is an environment where mixed-use flourishes. An objective of this framework is to foster a similar pattern of uses for Colne Harbour that also generates sufficient site values to help fund essential infrastructure.

Mixed-use can rarely be achieved simply by prescribing it. To establish itself and for it to be long lasting, it has to occur as a consequence of market forces and the existence of a raft of good

*Fine-grained 'blurred' mixed-use should be.. 'made up of small buildings, small open spaces and small enterprises.'*

K.Lynch, A theory of Good City Form (1984)

urban qualities, such as;

- **Density** of residential and employment populations
- **Adaptability** of buildings, allowing change over time
- **Connectivity** of movement (roads/paths)
- **Variety** of building types and tenure



Mixed-use is most likely to occur in locations that have the greatest number of pedestrians passing through. At Colne Harbour, this will coincide with the river front and main streets. To encourage and foster mixed-use, the majority of buildings in these locations should be capable of accommodating a wide range of potential occupiers and uses both now and in the future.

### Code URB3

◆ A variety of uses will be encouraged to migrate throughout the area. Development should include housing, small-scale retail, leisure, employment, health care and learning where facilities & uses provide for local needs.

Other uses that are compatible with their surroundings and other objectives of this Framework and Local Plan will also be appropriate, such as hotels, research enterprises and sports facilities.

### Code URB4

◆ All public spaces, buildings and blocks shall be used for as great a variety of uses as possible in order to encourage the maximum amount of human interaction, transaction and diversity. However, not all uses make good neighbours and other planning controls will be exercised to ensure compatibility.

In particular, consideration will be given to the relocation of the following uses to more appropriate sites;

- the gypsy site
- the scrap yards
- the coal yard

<sup>2</sup> Towards an Urban Renaissance - Final Report pp39, The Urban Task Force; 1999



## Density

Urban areas are more viable and sustainable if they are built to higher densities. This not only increases the potential for mixed-use it can also ensure that land which is scarce is used and serviced more efficiently. Adding enough people that live in close proximity to these uses animates the neighbourhood and breathes life into the centre. A concentration of people will also generate demand for goods and services (including public transport) and deliver street vitality throughout the day. But high density is not universally appropriate within the neighbourhood. There must be sufficient variety of density to enable different types of accommodation to be provided. A responsive pattern of development would enable some family housing and perhaps small workshops to be built towards the edge of the neighbourhood but still within comfortable walking distance of the centre. Conversely, higher buildings and densities are needed close to the river to produce an appropriate urban character and enclosure of space as well as generating a good mix of use and activity.

### Code URB5

◆ The highest built densities shall be concentrated towards the river frontage and the main streets but there will be a variety of densities within each neighbourhood. Densities can be reduced as one travels away from the river and the main transport corridor, towards the edge of the neighbourhoods.

Residential densities should be sufficient to realise good mixed-use along the river frontage and along main streets. A minimum net density of 100 persons per hectare is required in these locations.

## Building Heights

The consideration of the height of buildings within the environment is important principally for 2 reasons; Firstly, buildings should enclose space and the **character of space** is largely determined by the relationship between the size of the space and the height of the buildings around it. Secondly, taller buildings invariably accommodate more people, which is a fundamental ingredient of achieving an active and economically-viable piece of town.

Generally, buildings should increase in height towards places of special importance, such as the neighbourhood centres, urban squares and the river (see urban nodes Code URB14). The occasional building that is very much taller than its neighbours can be of benefit to urban character where they act as a landmarks and are appropriate to their context.

### Code URB6

◆ With the exception of land around the Hythe conservation area and the outer fringes of the new neighbourhoods, no new principal buildings should be of less than 3 stories.

### Code URB7

◆ In most circumstances, a 11m eaves height is adequate for buildings fronting a 10m edge adjacent to the river. No building fronting the river should have an eaves height lower than 8m.

### Code URB8

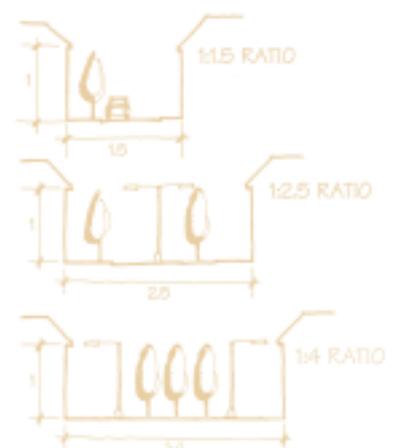
◆ Building heights throughout each neighbourhood should be sufficient to;

- Create a pleasing and appropriate enclosure of space
- Allow buildings to accommodate and generate enough movement to animate the area. Along the riverside, accommodation must be sufficient to generally animate the river edge throughout the day and evening.
- Provide adequate natural surveillance of public space

### Code URB7

◆ Buildings must face each other to enclose street space. The minimum height to width ratio permissible is 1:1.5. The maximum permissible ratio is 1:2.5.

◆ Where buildings enclose dynamically-static spaces, such as urban squares the maximum permissible ratio is 1:4



## Variety

A neighbourhood that is made up of a wide variety of different building types of various values will contain a variety of uses attracting a variety of people occupying space for various reasons at different times of the day. Such a place is likely to be vibrant, economically robust and sustainable. It is therefore important to promote variety as a way of increasing choice and opportunity. The greater the variety of buildings, spaces, rents, connections etc., the greater the number of choices and opportunities.

It is also crucial to consider the influence of time on the ability of an area to accommodate variety. Clearly, Colne Harbour will not develop all at once. It will most likely evolve and emerge incrementally. This process will work in favour of achieving variety, as it will allow for a more organic network of uses and connections to emerge.

Also, to some extent, buildings and spaces are capable of being used for different purposes at different times of the day. The use of schools by the community is a good example of this. With imagination, this principle can be applied across an area, allowing the maximum use of assets and resources, minimising waste and adding to the vitality of the area over an extended day.

### Code URB9

◆ All sites shall be developed in a manner that maximises the possibility of variety by ensuring that they contain a variety of buildings both for rent and for sale, with different types of space or accommodation most of which is capable of being used for various purposes.



Urban square with traffic calming and potential for a variety of uses,

### Code URB10

◆ Public space, including squares, streets and car parks shall be designed and managed so as to allow for occupation by different users throughout the day.

### Code URB11

◆ The design of buildings facing the riverfront and within 200m of the Hythe and the University rail stations (as proposed) must allow for mixed uses to be incorporated within them either upon original completion or at a later date. Ground floor storey heights shall not be less than 3m within these areas to increase the flexibility of this accommodation. (see also, MEN2)

## Adaptability

As we cannot predict the pattern and pace of change within the area, it is important to ensure that the environment created is capable of adaptation as needs arise. The codes for *variety* go some way towards addressing this. However, the adaptation of buildings and spaces can only occur economically if they are of a form that will appeal to or meet the broad requirements of a number of different users. The more specialised the building type, the fewer the options for the future.

A building with a number of existing or potential entrances from the street has greater flexibility and potential adaptability than building types that are designed with access from a single point. Entrances are also a focus of movement within a street and therefore also help to feed life into public space to the benefit of vitality and street safety.

### Code URB12

◆ Most buildings should either comprise of or have components that are of narrow depth. Generally, these buildings should not exceed 10m in depth.

### Code URB13

◆ Buildings should be designed to have a number of points of access from the street. These should lead directly to internal circulation cores/stairwells. The more frequently these entrances are spaced the better. Their spacing should not be less than every 40m.



## Legibility

Places are memorable for a number of reasons but the physical character of an area has a significant influence. Landmarks, views and focal points are especially important in establishing a unique sense of place. These attributes can be built into the design of new areas with the added benefit that they also help people find their way around.

Patterns of use and activity influence legibility in a different way. For example, a street with small shops and plenty of life is bound to lead somewhere important.

The most satisfactory places have both of these qualities of legibility in abundance.



## Landmarks and Focal Points

In attempting to achieve legibility, urban designers invariably employ five key elements. These can be used to evaluate and then manipulate the character of an area:-

**Paths;** the links between places, such as streets, footpaths, railway lines etc.

**Landmarks;** distinctive features of the landscape such as a prominent building, a monument in a park or a landscape feature.

**Focal points;** such as an urban square or a traffic junction.

**Edges;** distinctive linear features such as rivers or a line of a wall, sometimes separating districts with separate identities.

**District Identity;** the overall image of a place that identifies it as being different or unique. This can be influenced as much by the pattern of use as by architectural style.

Landmarks and focal points are especially important when planning for legibility. They have the

greatest bearing upon the visual drama of the town and must be designed into all developments from the beginning. These qualities cannot easily be added later.

In most cases it is unlikely that a single developer will control a large enough area of land to be able to plan a layout that accommodates sufficient landmarks and focal points to co-ordinate a seamless arrangement of these features across the area. Designers should in these circumstances refer to the Colne Harbour Illustrative Layout for further guidance and ideas.

Code URB14

Development shall be planned to maximise the legibility of the area by:-

- Demonstrating an understanding of the existing urban character of the area and making the most of appropriate views, landmarks and edges.
- Designing site layouts that introduce a new or reinforced pattern of townscape features such as new landmarks, focal points and distinctive streets.

Code URB15

Urban focal points must be incorporated throughout the public space network, including;

- a new mooring basin on the former Moler Works site
- elsewhere along the riverside
- around the Colne Causeway roundabout
- within the former Gas Works site
- within the new university corridor
- around each rail station

Where buildings surround focal points, these should be made especially distinctive to emphasise the townscape and social importance of the space.

Towers can be used to create townscape drama and distinctive focal points.



Code URB16

Buildings within each neighbourhood should collectively assert a coherent district character. Visual variety is still possible, provided any abrupt changes of character are small in scale.

### Visual Richness

Many new areas and buildings are visually monotonous. The craft that was once an integral part of architecture and design is often omitted to save money. But such places compare unfavourably with historic townscape where visual richness can be experienced at every turn. On one level, this can mean the way in which buildings produce an interesting or complex skyline. At a smaller scale, it can mean the design of a door threshold. The closer a feature is to the observer or the longer the viewing time, the more important it is to ensure that the urban fabric contains visual richness.

Buildings and the public realm can also be enriched by the incorporation of public art within its design. Art can make a positive contribution to the quality and enjoyment of architecture and public space and can help promote the special identity of an area.

In many instances, this will not necessarily entail the fixing of pieces of art within the environment. Artists can also help design everyday objects such as walls, windows, paving and doors and in doing so, lift their interest from the mundane to the extraordinary.

Developers will normally be expected to initiate ideas for the incorporation of public art into their schemes. In some instances, it may be appropriate to fund artist residencies<sup>3</sup> rather than specific artwork.

Code URB17

Buildings must be designed for visual richness. Designers must be able to demonstrate how they intend to achieve this for individual buildings and spaces.

Code URB18

The following major projects<sup>4</sup> shall incorporate works of public art or fund artist residencies to a value normally equivalent to 1% of the total construction cost of the development.

- UNIVERSITY
- MOLER WORKS
- SPOTTISWOODE
- GAS WORKS
- SCRAP YARDS
- ALBANY
- WHEELERS
- COAL YARD



Art as applied to buildings and as fixed pieces within public space



*Public Art is defined as art or craft work designed and/or made by professional artists and craftspeople which enhances the appearance or enjoyment of the public realm or buildings facing it.*

<sup>3</sup> Artist residencies are arrangements to engage an artist as a consultant for larger development projects. An artist may in these circumstances develop projects in the community, involving schools and individuals in a way that enriches the environment and the people that use it.

<sup>4</sup> However, most schemes are capable of funding some public art.



# A Sustainable part of Town

## Connections

A place will not prosper if it is not well connected. Just as any main street relies upon movement and 'footfall' to survive, they also need to be connected to uses and places further afield. It is from here that journeys to the neighbourhood or town centre begin. The easier the journey and the more direct the route, the greater the activity within and prosperity of the neighbourhood.

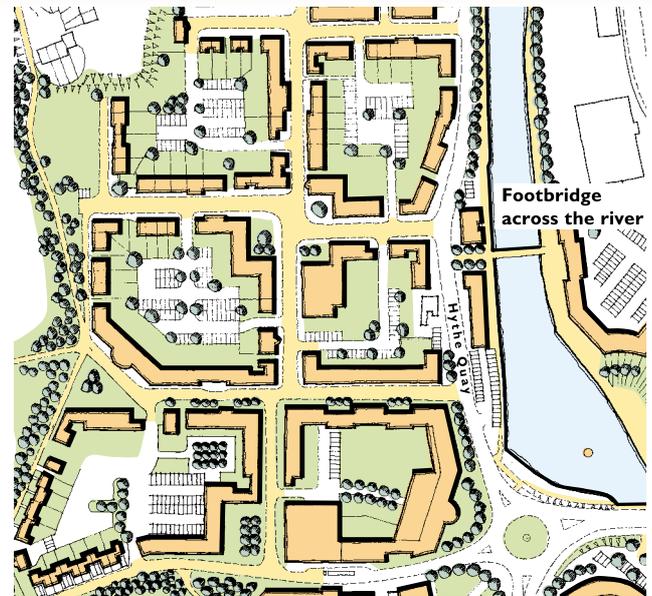
Locating housing and other uses that generate pedestrian movement within close proximity to the neighbourhood centres and ensuring that the routes between land uses and facilities are multifarious, has various advantages;

- Journey times to the neighbourhood centre are kept short
- It becomes unnecessary to use the car for these trips
- Walking, cycling and public transport become more convenient, healthy and sustainable options
- The amount of public space allocated for car parking can be minimised enabling a more human and distinctive environment to be created

Walking also has the added advantage in that it can be a highly sociable method of transport. The public space network should therefore maximise opportunities for public encounter and enjoyment of the environment and thereby encourage walking and cycling by;

- providing places for people to meet such as small squares and pocket parks
- ensuring streets are safe to use

Street corners are also opportunities for use diversity and public encounter. The design of corner buildings and the street should enable this to happen if not at the beginning, in the future. This can be achieved by ensuring ground floor corners are capable of adaptation to small shops and that pavements are sufficiently wide in these locations to allow uses to spill out onto the street. (see Public Spaces, PLA 3)



Connections between people and organisations also need to be fostered to draw upon the wealth of human skills and resources within the area. This process has already begun with the management of the Single Regeneration Budget programme for East Colchester. The continuation of this engagement well into the future will help to ensure the regeneration of Colne Harbour occurs in a way that is informed and democratic.

### Code SUS1

◆ A close grain of human connectivity and access via streets and paths should be established both within and between the new neighbourhoods and to surrounding areas. The street pattern must be continuous across the area, interrupted only by the river and railway line.

New pedestrian and cycle bridges should cross these features that currently bar movement and sever adjacent development sites.

### Code SUS2

◆ All streets should begin and terminate at intersections with other streets. Together, they should lead somewhere beyond the immediate surroundings. Layouts that are internalised and go nowhere will not be permitted.

Culs de sac should only be used where there is no alternative but their extension as a footpath that links with another street will almost always be possible. Their use is only appropriate in an already, well-integrated layout.

#### Code SUS3

◆ The layout of developments must link together to form a continuous, permeable network of streets based upon an orthogonal or deformed grid and the perimeter block. Generally, block sizes should vary, becoming smaller towards the river in a way that increase opportunities for pedestrian encounter, corner features and uses.

The ideal size of development block that allows for the greatest variety of building types, some on-site car parking and the provision of adequate private space to the rear is around 115m x 70m. This should represent the average block size within the area.

## Pollution and Resource Conservation

Every busy urban area is threatened by the polluting activities of its users. An environmentally sustainable future relies upon minimising consumption at a variety of levels including reducing the amount of traffic on our roads and minimising waste. Some of the investment in the future of the environment is a part of a long-term global strategy against pollution and decay. Other investments and decisions have an immediate, local impact and can include:

- Reducing traffic and switching to public transport, walking and cycling. This can lower the emission of harmful chemicals with subsequent improvements in the health of the community.
- Constructing buildings that consume less energy to build and maintain.
- Treating surface water drainage near to the source and ensuring effective controls against river pollution.
- Using local building materials where appropriate.
- Finding new uses for vacant buildings, where appropriate.

<sup>5</sup> These are buildings specifically designed to be especially ecologically sustainable through the use of local, renewable materials or by being largely self-sufficient in energy requirements, for instance.

#### Code SUS4

◆ Minimise waste. Natural and built resources should be reused wherever possible. Water supplies should be recycled by treating and reinstalling surface water close by.

#### Code SUS5

◆ Energy efficient buildings shall be encouraged. These should be designed to have a depth no greater than 10 m to allow natural ventilation to work without mechanical assistance. More radical 'Eco-buildings'<sup>5</sup> may be appropriate where they can be properly integrated into their surroundings.

#### Code SUS6

◆ The need to travel beyond the neighbourhood for most daily needs should be minimised. Developments shall be designed around local neighbourhood centres at the Hythe and university rail stations to allow for a variety of small-scale service uses to be accommodated.

#### Code SUS7

◆ Promote walking, cycling and public transport as a viable alternative to the car by ensuring a close grain of connectivity throughout the area and to adjoining areas.

## Transport

Only by substantial investment in new transport infrastructure can Colne Harbour develop to its full potential. The present reality is under-investment and inadequacy.

This is partly attributable to the planning blight that existed along the eastern approach corridor since the 1960's when it was decided to construct a new road from the A133 to the town centre. Stage 1 of the road link between the Greenstead roundabout and Hythe Quay was completed in 1995. The remaining section of the project has been abandoned. However, the traffic problems remain and options for the resolution of these issues will be the subject of separate research to be published as part of the Colchester Transport Corridor Study being undertaken by the Borough Council.



Whatever the outcome of this report, greater use must be made of the existing railway line that runs through the neighbourhoods. It is possible that the line could contribute to the development of the area in the following ways:-

- It can provide a quick route into the town centre, relieving Magdalene and Barrack Street and Hythe Hill of unnecessary traffic, freeing-up space for the bus.
- Developing a new station at the University neighbourhood will stimulate development each side of the railway.
- It will enable developers to allocate less land for car parking.

*The Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions predicts that, on current trends, by the year 2025 there will be an 83% growth in car ownership. No growth is predicted for public transport.*

Maximising the potential of the existing railway is fundamental to achieving good access into and out of the area. Whereas the existing Hythe station is well located to serve the adjacent community, an additional station is also required to serve the new, university neighbourhood. Locating car parking, cycle stands and a bus interchange at each of these rail stations will further enhance their attraction and their potential.

#### Code SUS8

◆ Provision shall be made for the construction of a new railway station between the University and the river. The station shall incorporate a full access bridge over the railway for pedestrians and cyclists, reinforcing the connection between the university, the river and town centre.

A high quality, frequent rail service between St. Botolph's station (terminus) and Colne Harbour is likely to be of substantial benefit to the staff and students of Essex University and those living and working in the new neighbourhoods. The rail link may also help to reduce traffic congestion within the town centre. Other urban areas have found that modern, Light Rail systems are most appropriate where similar objectives exist.

Success may depend upon its ability to tempt those using the car for short trips off the roads and raising sufficient capital to transform existing facilities at St. Botolph's and Hythe stations. In addition, the new University station could catch some London commuters nearer to their homes, reducing the number of journeys along busy streets to Colchester Town station.



Supertram, Sheffield

#### Code SUS9

◆ The restoration and improvement of Hythe rail station must be incorporated into future development proposals on adjacent land currently owned by Railtrack. Car parking shall be provided for rail users on adjacent sites where this can be accommodated behind new buildings fronting Hythe Station Road.

#### Code SUS10

◆ Up to 250 car parking spaces shall be provided on the Moler Works site for commuter car parking. This allocation may be provided through the shared use of parking space for other uses or by the construction of a multi-storey car park specifically for rail users.

Bus routes will develop as people move into the area to live and work and demand increases. These services should provide links to the rail stations from surrounding areas. Interchange facilities appropriate to the potential level of use should be provided at each station.

The operational flexibility of the bus can be improved by providing more potential routes between areas of demand. The connected street network proposed for Colne Harbour within this framework assists in this provision, making it possible to relieve congestion on the busiest routes at certain times of the day and increasing choice for people living in East Colchester.

#### Code SUS11

◆ **Bus interchange and cycle parking facilities shall be provided at the Hythe and the new University rail stations.**

Ensuring that streets are designed to be safe and convenient to use can encourage walking and cycling. These modes of transport have less impact upon the environment, consume fewer resources and therefore should be promoted in preference to the car.

The layout of the mixed-use neighbourhoods will ensure that homes, jobs and community facilities are all no more than a 5 minute walk away, and that traffic is calmed to low speeds. Dedicated cycle lanes can be built into the system where appropriate and streets that are easy to cross, well lit, well maintained and fronted by buildings that provide natural surveillance and are therefore safe, will tend to be used more often by more people.

High quality design of the public realm should also mean using good materials in imaginative ways. Building visual richness into the treatment of paving, street furniture and other infrastructure will promote the status of the street from traffic corridor to quality public space.



Quality paving materials used in an imaginative way can complement quality architecture

#### Code SUS12

◆ **Developers shall ensure that the design of new streets make a positive contribution to the aesthetic quality of the area including the use of high quality materials and street furniture. The needs of pedestrians, the disabled, cyclists and public transport shall be integrated into their design.**

#### Code SUS13

◆ **Traffic management measures shall be integrated into the detailed design of the street network so that vehicle speeds are limited to 20 mph or less. Traditional designs such as crossroads and tight corner radii should be employed where these can be used to reinforce either the urban character of the area or the traffic management regime.**

### Parking

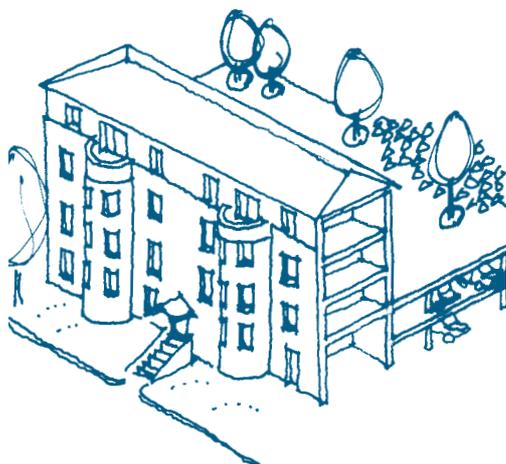
The amount of car parking provided within the area will have a substantial bearing upon the final character and appearance of the environment. A high level of provision will have a seriously negative impact upon other urban design qualities such as density, continuous frontages, the public space network, pedestrian safety and sense of place. Indeed, the realisation of sufficient land values and a quality environment within Colne Harbour relies upon achieving an environment with these good, urban design qualities.

But there is also a need for the substantial changes required in transport habits to occur in concert with the provision of better alternatives to the car.

Therefore, the framework allows developers to make a choice. They can elect to build with a reduced provision of car parking (as prescribed within Zone 2 of the Colchester Borough Council, Interim Car Parking Standards report 1999), or less. Alternatively, they can provide more spaces up to the maximum allowed within the current parking standards by accommodating cars within the perimeter blocks, on a 2 or 3 level parking deck. However, the provision of car parking shall not be at the expense of other codes within this framework.



On-street car parking generates pedestrian movement that can add to street activity and vitality. It also can be used to calm the speed of traffic but it is important that this facility to park outside homes, offices and shops is not allowed to dominate the appearance of the street or reduce the convenience of the street for other users. In some instances, such as along main streets, it will be necessary to limit street parking to short stay only.



Section of a 2 floor parking deck behind occupied buildings.

**Code SUS14**

◆ Generally, provision should be made for short-stay, on-street car parking throughout the area, where it is appropriate and safe to do so. On busy streets, this provision should be accompanied by adequate pedestrian crossings and pavement protection. In some cases, trees and cycle stands can usefully divide the margin between highway and footway between blocks of parking.

**Code SUS15**

◆ Additional car parking can be provided behind street frontages within the private space of internal blocks. However, there is a need to ensure that habitable rooms overlook such provision so that there is natural surveillance of the facility.

**Code SUS16**

◆ Car parking shall not be provided at the expense of other urban design codes set out within this framework. Any multi-level car parks that are provided shall either be built within the centre of perimeter blocks that contain other uses, or shall be designed so that they accommodate other uses with active frontages on the principal elevations that face important streets or squares.

**Code SUS17**

◆ A network of cycle routes both on and off-street shall be accommodated within the area. These routes shall connect with adjacent neighbourhoods, public and commercial facilities and public transport corridors.



The roof of parking decks can be used as communal gardens.

## Movement

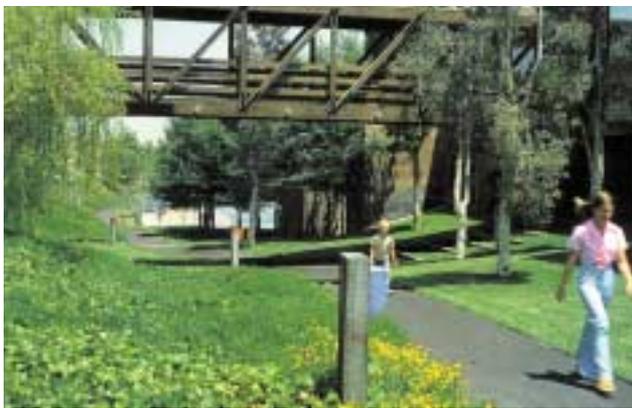
Colne Harbour will flourish if sufficient numbers of people can be drawn to the area. But too much traffic will reduce the attractiveness of living and working here and stifle investment. There needs to be a balance between catering for the needs of the town and the regeneration of the neighbourhood.

Much will depend upon the package of infrastructure that can be achieved. However, it is essential to ensure that the network of streets, paths, the river and railway are both retained and improved for integration into any future transport strategy for East Colchester.

The design framework needs to accommodate a number of variables in this respect. The pattern and quantity of movement will change over time and proposals need to be flexible to allow a variety of transportation scenarios. In all cases, paths of movement must be designed to be safe for all users. A connected urban layout helps. (see, A Sustainable part of Town - Connections)

### Code SUS18

◆ New and improved paths of movement though the area should be designed as public spaces. The fronts of buildings must face streets, the railway line or the river. In every case, routes must be designed as attractive thoroughfares however, traffic management measures will be required to control the volume and type of traffic using the street network.



## The natural environment

Areas of great nature conservation value border Colne Harbour. Additionally, several habitats of importance exist within the neighbourhoods;

- the Colne estuary, contains five national/international designations; Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area for Wild Birds (SPA), Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site), part of Candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The latter three carry the umbrella designation of European Marine Site.
- Salary Brook, Site of Importance for Nature Conservation; grassland
- Distillery Pond, Site of Interest for Nature Conservation; water and woodland
- University sites, Site of Importance for Nature Conservation; grassland



### Code SUS19

◆ Full account must be taken of the impact of any new development on any site scheduled as being of ecological importance. Further, the overall layout of the area shall allow for existing and new landscape elements to form a major part of the neighbourhoods for the enjoyment of people working, living and visiting Colne Harbour.

Green links can be used for connecting adjoining neighbourhoods.



The layout of Colne Harbour should be structured to provide several strategic green links. These are landscape corridors that primarily have 3 functions:

- 1 To allow for the movement of plant and animal species between primary habitats
- 2 To create linear areas for informal recreation and connectivity
- 3 To provide an overall landscape matrix for the area

#### Code SUS20

◆ Proposals within Colne Harbour will need to accommodate and improve the following green links:-

- The River Colne; through enhanced footpaths/cycleways and riverside landscaping.
- Distillery Pond; by preserving and improving the existing habitat between Old Heath Road, Haven Road and the river.
- Salary Brook; by maximising its recreational potential for Greenstead neighbourhood.
- Parsons Lane and links to adjacent areas; by better footpath surfacing and landscape management.
- Landscape bank rear of Haven Road; by better management.
- Between the University and the railway line; by diversifying the existing corridor

#### Code SUS21

- ◆ New green links are also required;
- Between Distillery Pond and the river; by establishing a new corridor
  - Between Haven Road and Hythe Quay; by establishing a new corridor

#### Code SUS22

◆ Bio diversity should be maintained and improved by enhancing significant habitats, introducing biotic support wherever possible and appropriate and by ensuring green corridors are enhanced, extended and linked for the benefit of wildlife. In some instances it will be possible to utilise these corridors for informal recreation and for providing pedestrian links to neighbouring areas.

#### Code SUS23

◆ Increase bio diversity also by creating a new lake and wetland on the university site.

#### Code SUS24

◆ Streets shall be landscaped where appropriate by planting avenues, formal groups of street trees, hedges and shrubs. Avenues shall be planted along Haven Road and Colne Causeway, with groups of trees along Hythe Quay.

#### Code SUS25

◆ Ensure internal courtyards within perimeter blocks are laid out as attractive, multi-use areas for the enjoyment of neighbouring properties. Roof gardens may be provided over decked vehicle parking to create a more substantial, private green space within an otherwise urban environment.

#### Code SUS26

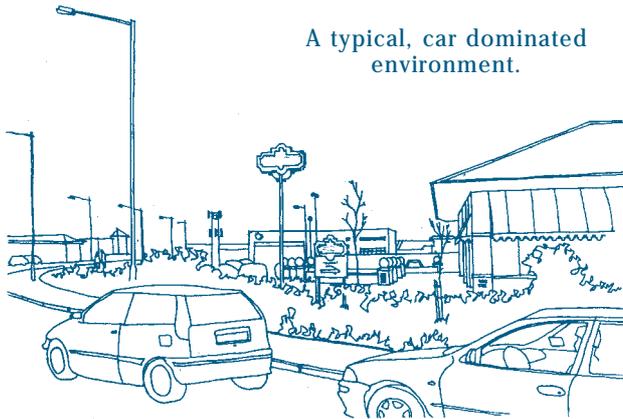
◆ Surface level parking areas shall incorporate planting to screen larger areas of parked vehicles and to contribute to the planting structure both within the development and throughout the area.



# A Place for People

## Streets

Without people, streets would be unnecessary. Instead, we could drive along dull, traffic corridors between home, work and the shopping centre. There would be little need to interact with the environment except in the most superficial way.



Thankfully, our European urban tradition stems from a necessity to build to a human scale. Streets that are direct, comfortable to use and stimulate the senses are a product of this common heritage. New development should therefore be designed to emulate these qualities if it is to satisfy the overwhelming desire of the majority of people to live and work in real places. Places designed for people.

To achieve this, designers must learn from the past and best practice of today. Whilst these urban codes are a guide, the creation of successful townscape will rely upon developers and architects bringing their individual talent to bear upon the opportunity.

A typical neighbourhood street.



### Code PLA1

◆ New and existing streets shall be designed and adapted to make it possible for the pedestrian, cyclist, bus and car to co-exist on equal terms. In the short term, this may require a reduction in road-space allocated for private vehicles.

### Code PLA2

◆ Public space with unobstructed pedestrian access should abut the public faces of all buildings.

Semi-public space between the street and buildings, where access is limited or controlled, should be avoided if at all possible.

Enclosed, private space between buildings and the street will not be permitted.

## Other Public Spaces

The success of the design framework relies upon its ability to influence the creation of a human environment. That is, a place that is both pleasant and safe to use. An environment with these qualities will attract people and therefore there must be adequate provision made for people to gather. Squares, playing fields and small, pocket parks can all contribute to the socialisation of Colne Harbour. The specific character of these spaces will depend upon their location and function, but the framework seeks an adequate provision to benefit people living, working and visiting the neighbourhoods.

### Code PLA3

◆ Developments shall include the provision of spaces for people to gather for different types of recreation. The extent of this provision will be determined by the potential numbers of people likely to make use of these spaces. Riverside walks and cycle paths, with links to land beyond, shall be provided by adjacent landowners.

The vibrancy and life of an area can be promoted and encouraged by ensuring that within certain areas, uses stay open until late. The use of public space will be maximised if premises are orientated to face the street, spilling out onto the space outside their premises where appropriate to increase human activity and vitality.



Footways within these areas need to be sufficiently wide to accommodate this. Also, a dense residential population living close by will help to sustain this *evening economy*.

#### Code PLA4

◆ The following locations are considered suitable for activities and uses that draw people in numbers to them in the evening;

- the riverside between Colne Causeway and the proposed River Barrage
- the main street within the university district

Elsewhere, the environment can still be animated by the occasional café, restaurant, pub, bar, all-night launderette etc. Indeed, these uses are encouraged on main streets and within other locations where their activity is unlikely to cause disturbance to residents.

The natural landscape beyond the Hythe and University neighbourhoods presents opportunities for informal recreation and interpretation. Properly managed, these open areas will contribute to the variety of spaces available for public use and will thus be a major attraction for the new sustainable community.



Urban squares for all to use

They are also a strategic connection to adjacent neighbourhoods and villages. The potential to encourage greater use of footpaths and cycle routes through them can only be realised after further investment.

#### Code PLA5

◆ Developments adjacent to the river shall make provision for the continuous connection of the long distance footpaths and cycle tracks between the town centre, Wivenhoe, Brightlingsea and Rowhedge. This will require the delineation of a cycle track between the river and building frontages.

### Public Facilities

Developing Colne Harbour will require substantial investment in new infrastructure. Some of this investment will be of direct benefit to everyone in Colchester whilst other infrastructure is intended to specifically serve the new community that will live and work in the area. Some of these new facilities have already been mentioned.

- **Green links, cycle routes and long distance footpaths;** will provide opportunities for recreation and better connections to surrounding areas.
- **A new railway station at the university and a refurbished Hythe station;** to provide access to the town centre and beyond
- **A river barrage and slipway;** that retains a high water level to allow greater use of the river by boats
- **A nursery school;** to assist parents that wish to return to work
- **A health centre;** for the benefit of all
- **A new primary school;** for 420 pupils to serve the new neighbourhoods
- **An Essex Estuaries Centre;** that educates and entertains on the history, culture and ecology of the Essex coastline
- **A new country park;** created from land that was formerly the settling ponds for material dredged out of the river
- **Artist studios;** to satisfy increasing demand for affordable workspace for local artists
- **Pocket parks;** providing small spaces for people to sit or rendezvous with others
- **Recreational venues;** including a climbing centre and facilities for young people.
- **Riverside walks;** providing paths that link

Wivenhoe and Rowhedge to the town and a focus for leisure facilities at Colne Harbour

● **New Footbridges;** across the river and railway



The way in which these facilities are funded and their speed of delivery will largely depend upon receipt of fair, financial contributions from the public and private sectors. The award of a Single Regeneration Budget for East Colchester will help to start the process. As private developments come forward, the borough council will negotiate planning gain from development profit. It is important for this burden to be spread across the whole of Colne Harbour, rather than proceed with an expectation that a few large schemes will fund it all.

Of course, the development of land that has previously been built upon or is despoiled is very much more expensive than developing green field sites. Therefore, in calculating planning gain payments, the borough council will also consider these extra factors. However, the design framework does indicate one way in which developers can realise a substantial uplift in site value over what may be considered possible without a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to regeneration.

In most situations, planning gain will either take the form of payments or a requirement to undertake additional works that are reasonably related to each site. A schedule of estimated expectations for planning gain for each site is given on Page 24.

## Public Safety

Street safety is partly attributable to well-managed space that is occupied for most of the day. People using public space maintain a natural surveillance over an area that discourages crime. Movement, particularly pedestrian movement, needs to be nurtured. But even traffic, when controlled to low speeds can contribute to the natural surveillance of an area. Put simply, a densely developed part of town that is busy is apt to be safe<sup>6</sup>.

Whilst the personal safety of people using the new neighbourhoods is a priority, this can be enhanced by the following collaborative measures:-

Codes PLA 6

◆ **Streets shall be designed to control the speed of traffic to 20 mph or less. (see code SUS13)**

**Culs de sac should be avoided wherever possible. (see code SUS2)**

**Streets must be well-lit and commercial premises encouraged to maintain illumination after they close.**



**Main streets need to be made suitable for all users and modes of transport.**

Combined with cycle stands, telephone boxes and loading bays, car-parking facilities generate activity that can enhance street safety.

<sup>6</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961)



Trees can be used to separate blocks of parking, avoiding a continuous line of vehicles along a kerb and providing safe places to cross the street.

#### Code PLA7

◆ On-street parking will be allowed to occur in most streets where this does not conflict with other urban design or traffic management objectives. (see code SUS12). On busy streets, it may be necessary to erect bollards to stop vehicles parking on footways.

The layout of development also has a fundamental impact upon the safety of people within the public realm. Buildings that detach themselves from the streets, placing walls, fences or expansive areas of car parking between them and the street tend to create an environment that is less safe for the pedestrian. Conversely, buildings that are brought closer together, where the street can be observed from within buildings and where there is ground floor activity, tend to contribute to a safer environment.

It follows that to maximise the benefits of this arrangement, building frontages should not be interrupted by too many gaps or breaks.

#### Code PLA8

◆ Development should be arranged on the principle of the perimeter block where the front of each building faces the street. All main pedestrian entrances into buildings shall be from the street. Buildings around each perimeter block shall be as continuous and as close to the public footway as possible, avoiding unnecessary gaps in the frontage.

No building shall turn its back on the street.

Surveillance of the street from within buildings can be enhanced if the ground floor accommodation is elevated slightly above street level. This will only be appropriate in those situations where disabled access can be achieved. A difference of between 0.5 and 1 metre can be sufficient. This can also allow the accommodation of basements with additional entrances from the street, where the water table permits.

#### Code PLA9

◆ Launderettes, newsagents, off-licences as well as bars and cafes all provide valuable night time activity and generate natural surveillance. Ground floor uses along the riverfront will be encouraged to stay open until late. Where circumstances permit, uses will be encouraged to spill out onto the street or onto the quayside.

Streets need traffic to feed and sustain them but volumes must be limited to a level that allows the free movement of other users. This is particularly important for street safety and to maintain a level of comfort that is compatible with encouraging investment within a quality environment.

#### Code PLA10

◆ A maximum traffic volume target of between 8,000 and 12,000 vehicles per day shall be applied to Hythe Quay and Hythe Hill.

Even at these volumes it is possible to design the street to allow on-street servicing and parking (which is so important for the small business that relies upon passing trade) and still create an attractive environment for the community that live there. Traffic calming helps to keep everything under control.

#### Code PLA11

◆ In order to have a reasonable traffic calming effect, the width of a 2-lane carriageway along main streets should be limited to 5.5 metres. Parking/servicing bays and bus lanes should be accommodated wherever possible.

# Appendix 1

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

A wide range of consultation and participation exercises, as described below, has been undertaken prior to the adoption and publication of this Supplementary Planning Guidance.

### **East Colchester Visioning Exercise**

An extensive public “visioning” exercise involving all sectors of the local community was undertaken during early 2000

This exercise was linked to both the existing SRB initiative in the area and the Council’s consideration of objections to the first deposit draft local plan.

A number of public meetings and “drop in” sessions were held in the Hythe area to obtain the public’s views. Numerous businesses, local schools, other organisations, and relevant statutory bodies with an interest in the area were also consulted directly, in particular on the Draft Design Framework.

Over 400 responses were received from this exercise, and these have been used to inform both the final version of the Urban Design Framework and 2nd, Deposit Draft Local Plan

The Design Framework received considerable overall support, in particular the proposals for upgrading the river, and promoting high quality mixed-use, sustainable development.

### **East Colchester Commission**

The Borough Council has set up this officer/member working party to take forward the Council’s strategy for East Colchester, including the Hythe.

This group has fully considered the Design Framework, and resolved to support its proposals.

### **Hythe Community Forum**

This liaison group, consisting of a wide range of local interests and Colchester Borough Council, is operated as part of the SRB initiative. The forum has considered and supports the Design Framework.

### **Adoption as Planning Guidance**

This Urban Design Framework was formally Adopted by the Borough Council as Supplementary Planning Guidance on 4th January 2001



# Appendix 2

## PLANNING GAIN EXPECTATIONS

Site	works plus	contribution to other infrastructure
1. Molar Works (store & student accommodation)	mooring basin	£1,300,000
2. Molar works (remainder)	footbridge	£350,000
3. University	railway station footbridge nature conservation area	£1,000,000
4. Spottiswoode		£1,500,000
5. Gas Works		£200,000
6. Gas Board		£100,000
7. Albany		£250,000
8. Tractor Site		£500,000
9. Scrap Yards		£1,000,000
10. Coal Yards		£100,000
11. ABP		£150,000
12. Wheelers Gypsy Site	relocate gypsy site	£200,000
13. Hythe Quay East		£250,000
14. Gas Works Quay	footbridge	-
15. Rail sidings		£100,000
<b>Total value of works and contributions</b>	<b>£5,000,000</b>	<b>£7,000,000</b>

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## COLNE HARBOUR REGENERATION

**T**he regeneration of Colne Harbour represents a unique opportunity for the town. In following the guidance of the design framework, a partnership between the community, the private sector and public agencies can help transform East Colchester into a very special place.

This is of course a more complex and expensive option for the Hythe than leaving everything to market forces, but it is one that could deliver the maximum number of new jobs, homes and leisure opportunities. It is also an especially sustainable and environmentally conscious development approach that requires a synthesis between planning, urban design and development objectives.

***Only by working together  
can we make it happen.***

# COLNE HARBOUR DESIGN FRAMEWORK

