

WEST MERSEA

Your Neighbourhood Plan



SUBMISSION
STAGE DRAFT
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL
APRIL 2021



West Mersea

Planning for Mersea's future

FOREWORD

A public meeting was held at Mersea Centre (The MICA) on the 1st September 2016 in response to the Colchester Borough proposition that 350 houses be built in West Mersea under their emerging Local Plan. The meeting was called by West Mersea Town Council and chaired by the Mayor, Cllr Carl Powling, and over 500 people tried to attend although many were unable to get into the building.

From this meeting the Neighbourhood Planning Group emerged. The Town Council obtained a grant through which the Planning Group were able to employ a co-ordinator. The first open meeting was held in the Council Offices on 28th September 2016. Following an RCCE training course the first formal meeting was on 25th October.

Sub-Groups were formed to cover specific subjects and the make-up of these, and the Steering Committee, changed over time, as indeed did the chairmanship.

We acknowledge with thanks the many local people who have played their part in the production of the **West Mersea Neighbourhood Plan** and the great support from Islanders Islanders in completing Questionnaires, attending open meetings and adding their input.

Chairman	Cllr. Carl Powling	Cllr Peter Banks	Peter Clements MBE
-----------------	--------------------	------------------	--------------------

Co-ordinator	Debbie Gooch	Robin Wykes,	Cllr. Peter Banks
---------------------	--------------	--------------	-------------------

Original Members of the Steering Group

Cllr. Dave Bragg	Alan Brook	David Cooper	Cllr. (CBC) Robert Davidson
John Dyson	Veronique Eckstein	Cllr. Chris Glover (East Mersea PC)	Richard Haward
Cllr Bob Jenkins	Paul Knappett	Cllr Paula Moore	Prof. Marcus Pembrey
Richard O'Hanlon-Smith	Faith Tippett	Cllr. Sophie Weaver	

Sub-Groups

Health & Wellbeing	Prof. Marcus Pembrey	Peter Clements	Faith Tippett	
Housing	Peter Banks	Carl Powling	Robin Wykes	Sandra Howard
Business	Alan Brook	Richard O'Hanlon Smith	Carl Powling	

Crime & Safety	Bob Jenkins		
Education & Environment	Veronique Eckstein	Peter Banks	Paul Knappett
Transport	Alan Brook	Peter Clements	
Open Spaces	David Cooper		
Tourism & Caravan Parks	Paul Knappett	David Cooper	Peter Banks
Landscape & Heritage	Peter Banks	David Cooper	Alan Brook
Photographic Survey	Alan Brook		

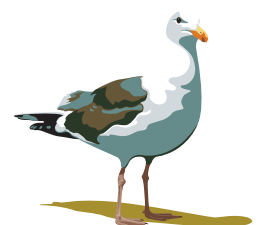
Logo Design	Will Weaver
Cover illustrations	Lee Tridini
Photographs	Alan Brook





CONTENTS

1. Introduction	5
2. Planning Policy Context	9
3. Vision and Objectives	11
4. Planning Strategy	13
Policy WM 1 - Planning Strategy	14
5. Housing	15
Policy WM 2 - Housing Development	16
Policy WM 3 - Land at Dawes Lane	18
Policy WM 4 - Affordable Housing in Housing Developments	19
Policy WM 5 - Affordable Housing on Exception Sites	20
Policy WM 6 - Housing Mix	21
Policy WM 7 - Loss of bungalows and chalet dwellings	22
Policy WM 8 - Measures for New Housing Development	23
Policy WM 9 - Houseboats	24
6. Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation	25
Policy WM 10 - Open Space, Sport and Recreation Sites	25
Policy WM 11 - The Glebe Sports Grounds	26
7. Traffic and Transport	27
Policy WM 12 - Development Access	28
8. Business	29
Policy WM 13 - Retention of existing employment centres	29
Policy WM 14 - Co-operative workspaces	30
Policy WM 15 - Marine Services	30
Policy WM 16 - Town Centre	31
9. Infrastructure and Services	33
Policy WM 17 - New Health Facilities	33
Policy WM 18 - Health and Wellbeing	34
Policy WM 19 - Education Infrastructure Capacity	34
10. Natural Environment, Landscape and Coastal Protection	37
Policy WM 20 - Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance and Avoidance Mitigation Strategy	37
Policy WM 21 - Biodiversity	38
Policy WM 22 - Mitigating Landscape Impact	39
11. Tourism	41
Policy WM 23 - Tourism and Leisure Development	42
Policy WM 24 - Caravan Parks	43
Policy WM 25 - The Coastal Footpath	43
12. Heritage	44
Policy WM 26 - Heritage Assets	45
Policy WM 27 - Local Heritage Assets	46



13. Development Design	47
Policy WM 28 - Minimising Light Pollution	47
Policy WM 29 - Design Considerations	48
Policy WM 30 - Sustainable Construction Practices	48
14. Monitoring and Delivery	49
Policies Maps and Inset Maps	50
Policies Map	51
Inset Map West	52
Inset Map East	53
Glossary	54
Appendix 1 - Overall Summary of Open Space, Sport and Recreation areas for Mersea	56
Appendix 2 - West Mersea Town Council proposals for highway improvements	64
Appendix 3 - Agreement of Understanding and Cooperation	66
Appendix 4 - Nationally Designated Heritage Assets	67



1

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** The Localism Act 2011 introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to prepare Neighbourhood Development Plans, which establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in the neighbourhood. These Neighbourhood Development Plans, when properly made become part of the legal planning framework for the designated area.
- 1.2** A Neighbourhood Development Plan (or “Neighbourhood Plan”) is a community-led planning framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. It is about the use and development of land and contains a vision statement, aims, planning policies, proposals for improving the area or providing new facilities, or allocation of key sites for specific kinds of development. Because of this, neighbourhood plans are necessarily quite technical documents and the wording of planning policies contained within them will be used, in this case by Colchester Borough Council, to decide whether planning applications should be approved.
- 1.3** Town and Parish councils are encouraged to produce their own Neighbourhood Plans enabling local people to have a say as to how their neighbourhood grows and develops. In a designated “neighbourhood area” which contains all or part of the administrative area of a town or parish council, it is that town or parish council which is responsible for neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood Plans cannot contradict the main government planning policies or the strategic policies in the adopted Local Development Plan (or “Local Plan”) for the area. For example, they cannot propose less development than is planned for in the adopted Local Plan. They also have to have regard to the content of emerging local plans, especially when those plans are at an advanced stage in their preparation.
- 1.4** This is the draft neighbourhood Plan for West Mersea, formally known as the “Submission Draft Plan” and covers the period up to 2033.
- 1.5** The Neighbourhood Plan Regulations require a neighbourhood plan to:
- be appropriate, having regard to National Planning Policy;
 - contribute to achieving sustainable development;
 - be in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area; and
 - be compatible with EU obligations and Human Rights requirements.

A separate “Basic Conditions Statement” has been produced and identifies how the Neighbourhood Plan satisfies these requirements.

How the Plan was prepared

- 1.6** The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Government’s Neighbourhood Planning Regulations and, in particular, has involved considerable local community engagement to gather evidence for the content of the Plan.
- 1.7** In response to the Colchester Borough proposition that 350 houses be built in West Mersea under their emerging Local Plan, a public meeting was held at Mersea Centre (The MICA) on the 1 September 2016. The meeting was called by West Mersea Town Council and chaired by the Mayor, Cllr Carl Powling, and over 500 people tried to attend although many were unable to get into the building. From this meeting the Neighbourhood Planning Group emerged, and Sub-Groups were formed to cover specific subjects. The make-up of these, and the Steering Committee, changed over time, as indeed did the chairmanship.
- 1.8** The West Mersea Steering Group was placed in a somewhat unusual position in that not only did the Colchester Borough emerging Local Plan require 350 houses to be built in West Mersea, (which was volubly objected to at the public meeting), but it specified the sites. There were to be 200 houses at MER18 (Brierley Paddocks) and 150 at MER02 (Dawes Lane), thus denying West Mersea Town any choice in site selection.
- 1.9** In September 2016 an application was made by the Town Council to Colchester Borough Council to designate a Neighbourhood Area for the whole of the Town Council’s area. Following consultation, the Neighbourhood Area, as identified on Map 1, was designated in November 2016.



Map 1 - Neighbourhood Area

- 1.10** Following designation, the Neighbourhood Planning Group and Sub-Groups undertook a significant amount of background research to identify a baseline for the establishment of planning policies in this Plan. This research forms the evidence that supports the Plan and is available on the West Mersea Neighbourhood Plan website at <https://www.merseamatters.uk/> Whilst East Mersea Parish Council declined to become part of the West Mersea Neighbourhood Plan, it was agreed to be of great importance the island be considered as a whole; so an agreement of understanding and cooperation was later signed and there has been a representative on the Planning Group ever since.
- 1.11** During 2017 and early 2018 the Planning Group worked toward developing a policy framework to guide and meet the strategic policies of the emerging Local Plan and all other development or community needs identified by local people. This was achieved through engaging and consulting with the community via local media coverage, briefing sessions at many venues including island organisations, the school,

and gatherings at public houses. There were three surveys undertaken in 2018: a housing and general needs survey to the 3,400 addresses in West Mersea, a survey of future aspirations of all registered or known businesses in the town, and a survey of sporting needs and assessments of the future to all the sporting organisations. The results of these surveys and public engagements were analysed to gain a clear understanding of both the community's and business's aspirations.

- 1.12** On 26 June 2018 the Planning Group held a public consultation session at Mersea Centre (The MICA.) The aim of the session was for the Sub-committees to confirm that they had understood the community's aspirations for the future of West Mersea and produced policy considerations which they would support. Visitors were encouraged to openly discuss all the proposals and where appropriate leave their comments on "post-it" notes as a record for the neighbourhood plan evidence base. Each Sub-committee then drew up a set of policy considerations which were discussed in turn and in depth by the Planning Group and from this, the final draft policies were produced.
- 1.13** In addition, there were four surveys carried out in 2018: a housing and a general needs surveys, each sent to the 3,400 addresses in West Mersea, a survey of future aspirations of all registered or known businesses in the town, and a survey of sporting needs and assessments of the future for all the sporting organisations. The results of these surveys and public engagements were analysed to gain a clear understanding of both the community's and businesses' aspirations. Sub-committees, as above, were set up to consider each specific subject.
- 1.14** The community's response confirmed that the Planning Group has a unique and difficult situation matching the need to meet the aspirations of the community versus overloading the already stretched infrastructure, whilst at the same time conforming to the emerging Colchester Local Plan. If one adds to this a further 200 houses alongside the annual housing infill, the expanding caravan parks and increasing visitor numbers, the brief can at best be described as challenging.
- 1.15** In 2019 a further grant was obtained from Locality and Places4People Planning Consultancy was engaged to oversee the final preparation of the Plan and guide the Steering Group through the consultation and examination stages.
- 1.16** In October 2020 consultation commenced on the "Pre-Submission" Draft Neighbourhood Plan. The consultation period was initially planned to end on 11 December but, due to the ongoing restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, the consultation period was extended to 4 January 2021, a total of just over 10 weeks. Following the completion of the "pre-submission" consultation, comments received were considered and necessary amendments to the Plan will be made ahead of submission to Colchester Borough Council. The Plan will now be subject to a further period of consultation by the Borough Council followed by the examination of the Plan by an independent

Neighbourhood Plan Examiner. The Examiner will consider the content of the Plan and its planning policies, how it's been prepared against a set of "Basic Conditions" and what amendments are required to meet these conditions. Subject to the inclusion of these amendments, the Examiner will recommend that the Plan is subject to a local referendum. If more than 50% that vote are in favour of the Plan at the referendum, it will be approved and become part of the local planning policy framework for the determination of planning applications in West Mersea.

- 1.17** In addition to the planning policies, community actions are included in the Plan. Community actions do not form part of the "statutory" Neighbourhood Plan but are included to identify other areas of improvement and change that residents have identified during the preparation of the Plan. The planning policies appear in boxes numbered WM1, WM2 etc while separate boxes contain the non-statutory community actions.

About West Mersea

- 1.18** Within the Borough there are many villages and locations which enjoy beautiful, rural and coastal landscapes and many can boast a proud heritage, but only Mersea is an island with a tidal causeway which regularly floods and isolates it from the mainland. As an island Mersea has unique and distinguishing features which create a strong sense of place, whilst the rarity of some of its features, relative to other parts of the Borough, contribute to the highest landscape value.
- 1.19** On approaching the island, across the distinctive landmark of the ancient Strood causeway, there is a distinct landscape structure which gives the feeling of homecoming and wellbeing for the residents and something special for visitors to experience. The senses are stimulated by the smell of the land and the changing view of the estuarine marsh/mudflats, both of which change with the rise and fall of the tide. This high value view is framed by a landscape with an absence of detracting visible features and a topography that slopes down from a high point/ridge just to the north of the settlement towards the coastline, which is a designated SSSI.
- 1.20** The main Colchester road, from the Strood, follows old field boundaries until it reaches the Parish Church. From Queen's Corner, houses and shops evolved either side of the road as far as the Church. This explains the spread of the shopping area, which has continued to serve the village growth well. In recent years more shops have been added in this central area, together with a Community Centre, Library and Museum. In the centre is the War Memorial, sheltering under a vast Lime tree set in a triangular green. From the Parish Church the Coast Road runs down past the natural freshwater spring of St. Peter's Well, to Hove Creek, with its assorted jumble of houseboats, then along to 'The Hard' and 'The Old City'. Here, 'The Old Victory' public house and weather-boarded fishermen's cottages formed a small community, with a ditch, charmingly known as 'The Bumby', which carried waste down to the sea from cottage privies.

1.21 The character area of the 'Old City' encompasses the maritime area of the island known as 'The Hard' and the anchorage. The area represents both industrial (primarily oystering and fishing) and leisure activities (primarily boating) and possesses a multitude of historic assets associated with the island's maritime history, which included boat building, repair and servicing, much of which continues to this day. It has the most densely concentrated area of listed buildings on the island (mainly along The Lane) and stretches along the island's western coastline, with panoramic views across to Packing Marsh Island and Cobmarsh Island. The earliest buildings date from the first half of the seventeenth century. The area is a major tourist attraction with freshly-harvested Mersea oysters being offered in several restaurants located adjacent to active shellfish processing sheds. Now redundant 19th century oyster pits provide a historic setting. The array of craft moored or laid up here in a random fashion, along with the old character houseboats, bring a unique charm to this area.

1.22 The village centre, with its cluster of historic assets, is centred on the junction of High Street and Yorick Road and marks the focal point of the town. The church of St Peter and St Paul dates from the Late Saxon period with The Hall (dating from the 16th century) standing on the south east side of the church. To the north the area loses its primarily commercial character and roads off High Street North are of a more residential nature.

1.23 The Beach and Esplanade are characterised by an attractive sand and shingle beach with traditional beach huts and a small number of amenities such as the Two Sugars Café (a WW2 Gun Emplacement) and car parks. Visual characteristics are panoramic views of the seascape and long-distance views of the estuary, including the ancient chapel of St. Peter's-on-the-Wall, wind farms and Bradwell Power Station.

1.24 Within West Mersea's landscape there are extensive international and nationally important features and elements of wildlife, earth science, archaeological, historical and cultural interest that have a value in their own right. The landscape, mostly agricultural land which has been farmed for centuries, is ever-changing with the seasons and light, it can be wild in character, with expansive sweeping skies holding a sense of remoteness, or isolation, which again contributes to a strong sense of place. Artists and photographers have long been attracted by these variations in the island's landscapes, its maritime character, heritage sites and feeling of tranquillity.

1.25 In 2019 the estimated population of West Mersea was 7,285, a 5% increase on the population in 2001. By comparison, Colchester Borough's population grew by 25% in the same period. At the same time some 43% of the population was aged over 60 compared with 22% across the Borough as a whole. At the beginning of 2021 it is estimated that there are 3,601 residential addresses in West Mersea.



2

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1** The Neighbourhood Plan must be "in general conformity with strategic policies in the development plan for the local area and contribute to sustainable development." For West Mersea, this means the National Planning Policy Framework and the Colchester Local Plan, as explained below.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.2** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's high-level planning framework which must be taken into account in the preparation of development plan documents and when deciding planning applications. The most recent version of the NPPF was published in February 2019 and it sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 11 states:

"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development."

For plan-making this means that:

- a) *plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;*
- b) *strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:*
 - i. *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or*
 - ii. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole."*

Local Development Plan

- 2.3** At the time of the preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan the following Local Plan documents relevant to the area were in place:
- Colchester Core Strategy (2008)
 - Development Policies DPD (2010)
 - Site Allocations DPD (2010)
 - Focused Review of the Core Strategy (2008) and Development Policies DPD (2010) (July 2014)
- 2.4** Work commenced on the preparation of the new Colchester Borough Local Plan 2017-2033 in 2014 and

at the time of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan it had been submitted to the Government for examination by a Planning Inspector.

Colchester Core Strategy

- 2.5** For West Mersea, the Core Strategy contains strategic policies and that states the town "is a relatively self-contained coastal community offering quality tourism and recreation opportunities. The West Mersea waterfront will be conserved for its historic maritime character and distinctive maritime-related local businesses. There are some limited development opportunities in West Mersea and approximately 280 new homes will be developed during the plan period, including over 200 homes that have already been approved or completed. An additional 173sqm of net retail floorspace will also be sought to service the residents of Mersea Island. Key facilities to be delivered in West Mersea include allotments and a new health centre."

- 2.6** The town is categorised as a District Settlement in Policy SD1 - Settlement Hierarchy.

Development Policies DPD

- 2.7** The Development Management Policies document provides broad and generally non-location specific policies by which planning applications will be considered. Given that it's ten years since the policies were adopted, some will now be out of date and superseded by the NPPF.

Site Allocations DPD

- 2.8** This local plan document was also adopted in 2010 and identifies sites for development in the period to 2021. It identified sites for employment and housing development in West Mersea which have since been implemented.

Focused Review of the Core Strategy (2008) and Development Policies DPD (2010)

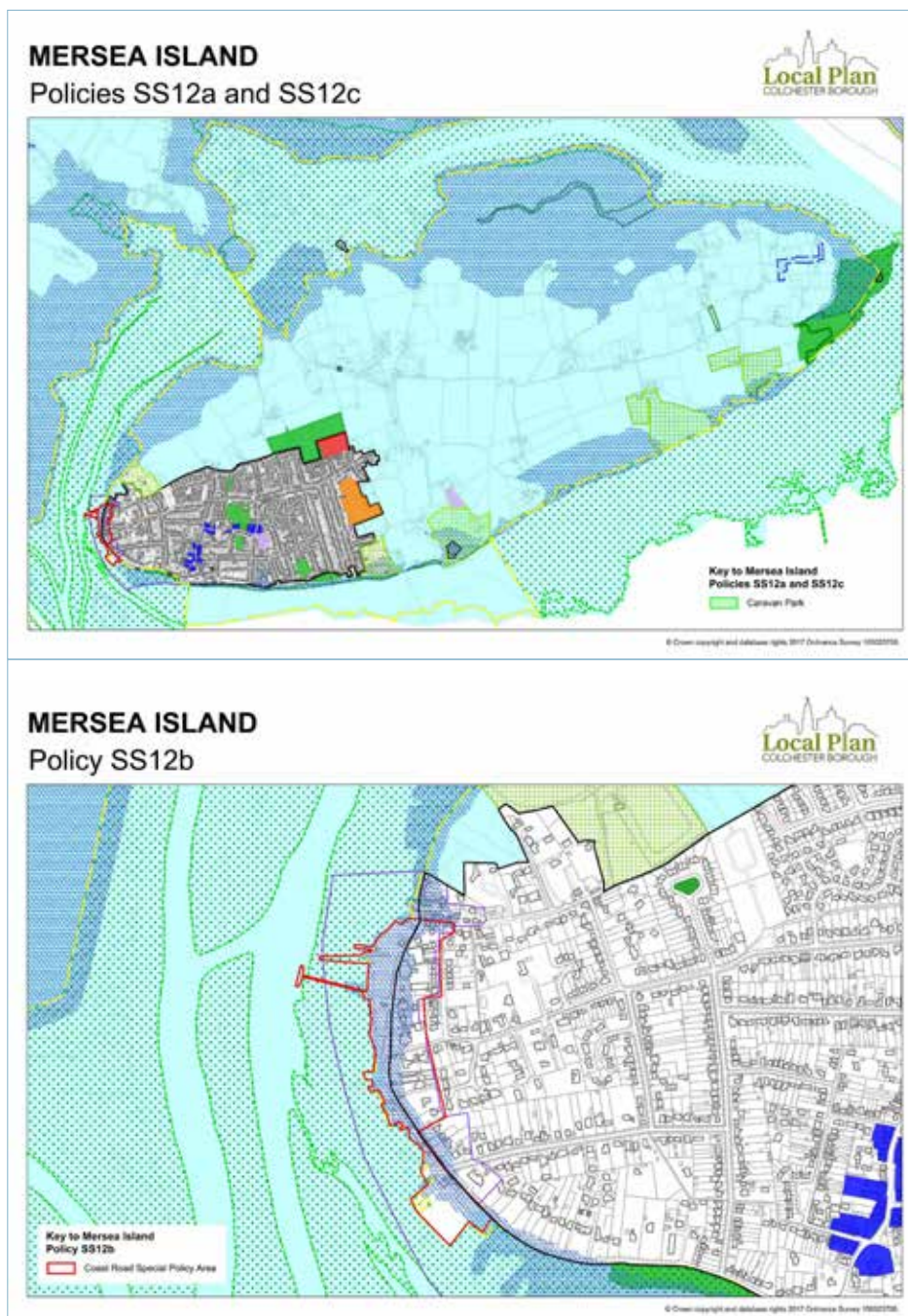
- 2.9** The introduction of the NPPF in 2012 meant that some of the adopted Local Plan policies had become out of date and required a review to make them compliant. The Focused Review of certain policies achieved this and, combined with the remaining policies of the previously adopted local plan documents, remains in place as the adopted local plan.

Emerging Colchester Local Plan 2017-2033

- 2.10** The emerging Local Plan will, when fully adopted, replace all the previous local plan documents referred to above. In February 2021 the Borough Council adopted the North Essex Authorities' Shared Strategic Section 1 Plan. Section 2 of the emerging Local Plan, the Colchester Borough specific policies, had yet to be examined.
- 2.11** The Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to be in general conformity with the strategic planning policies in Section One, while Section Two also contains a number of policies and proposals for West Mersea which are referred to in the appropriate sections in this

Neighbourhood Plan. The policies and proposals of the Neighbourhood Plan have regard to the content and status of the emerging Local Plan appropriate to the stage at which the preparation of that Plan has reached.

- 2.12** The Borough Council has also adopted a number of Supplementary Planning Documents and other planning guidance. These will, to a greater or lesser extent, have some relevance to planning in West Mersea. Their content, along with the adopted policies in both the adopted and emerging Local Plan, have been taken into account in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan.



Emerging Colchester Local Plan Policies Maps for West Mersea

3

VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The West Mersea Vision

To maintain and enrich West Mersea as a vibrant and cohesive community ensuring new development will be both sustainable and improve life for ourselves without prejudicing lives for future generations. Support the local economy, provide high quality accommodation for all in our community while respecting the individual character of the town and protecting our natural environment.

Objectives

Housing

- 1 - To ensure that new housing meets the needs of West Mersea.
- 2 - To ensure new housing is available, appropriate and accessible to people of all ages and circumstances in order to maintain a balanced, cohesive and diverse population.

Open Space, Sport and Recreation

- 3 - To preserve and promote open spaces and recreation.
- 4 - To provide a balance between the different types of open space.
- 5 - To make parks and open spaces accessible to a wider range of people.
- 6 - To provide for more attractive communal areas for informal and formal recreation.

Traffic and Transport

- 7 - To ensure that any proposed development provides footpath and cycleway links to the town, coastal and recreational areas to encourage residents to walk and cycle easing congestion, pollution and parking problems.

Business

- 8 - To preserve the long-term viability of the harbour area for maritime, commercial and leisure activities.
- 9 - To support the sustainable development of satisfactory, long-term employment on the island for Mersea residents.

Infrastructure and Services

- 10 - To support maintenance and improvement of Water, Gas, Electricity, Broadband, Mobile Telephone, Waste Disposal and Recycling services, to provide

satisfactory utility infrastructure, emphasising Mersea Island's unique situation.

- 11 - To maintain the town centre's character and focal point for commerce and the community with its cafés, Community Centre and historical heritage.

Natural Environment and Landscape

- 12 - To preserve and enhance existing wildlife corridors and ensure that any new development meets the NPPF requirements.
- 13 - To protect and enhance the international, nationally and locally designated habitats in their own rights and from the impact of new development.
- 14 - To protect and enhance the unique landscape of the island from inappropriate development.

Tourism

- 15 - To ensure where tourism is encouraged it respects the character of the rural countryside, coastal character and natural habitat.
- 16 - To support existing and new tourist facilities and leisure developments which benefit the island's economy and employment and are not contrary to the well-being of the island's residents.

Heritage

- 17 - To conserve and enhance the town's many heritage assets and ensuring that any new development serves to make a positive contribution to the existing historic environment.

Development Design

- 18 - To preserve the Town Centre character, the Strood Causeway and Packing Marsh Island
- 19 - To minimise the impact of new development on the environment.



4

PLANNING STRATEGY

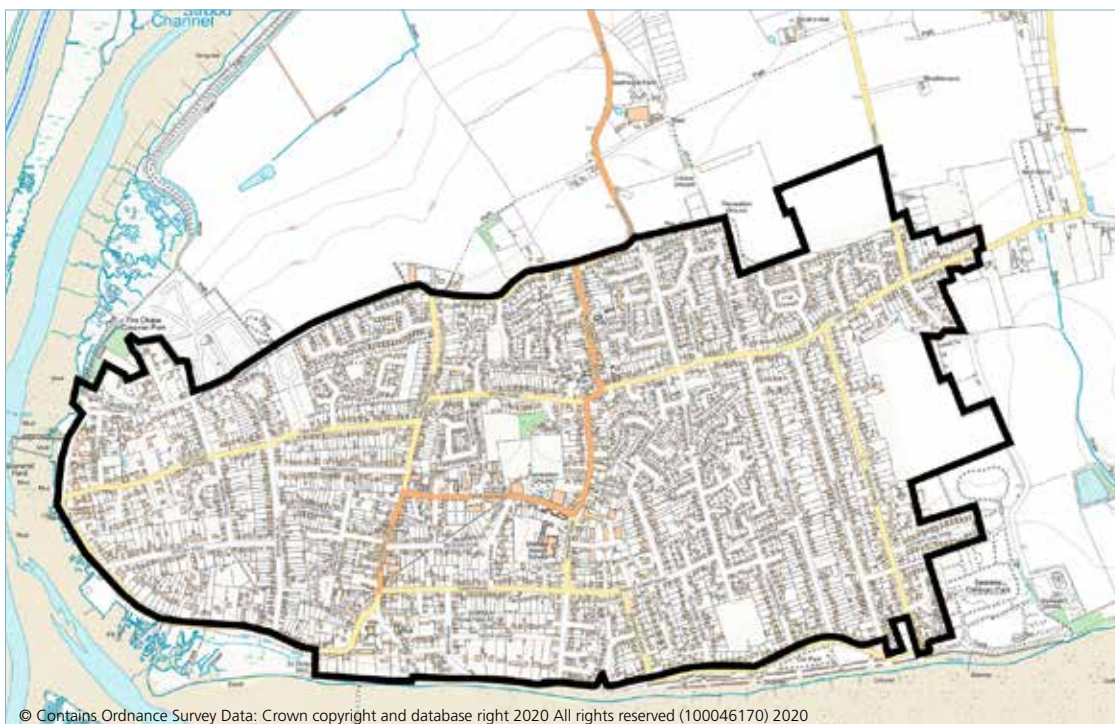
- 4.1** As noted above, the planning policy framework for Colchester is currently evolving from the adopted Local Plan to an emerging Local Plan for the period to 2033 (the emerging Local Plan). Until such a time as the emerging Local Plan is fully adopted, the existing Local Plan policies remain in force, albeit that the emerging Local Plan should be taken into account in making planning decisions, given its advanced stage.

The West Mersea Planning Strategy

- 4.2** The emerging Local Plan designates West Mersea as a “Sustainable Settlement” given the level of services, facilities and jobs in the town. However, it also recognises that the town is heavily constrained by its coastal boundaries and the associated wildlife and landscape designations that come with an estuarine location. The strategy of the emerging Local Plan is to channel some growth to the most sustainable settlements appropriate to their size, local landscape character, local constraints, identified need and the availability of infrastructure.
- 4.3** The Neighbourhood Plan supports an appropriate level of growth in accordance with the approach in Policy SG1 of the emerging Local Plan, where such

growth will not have an unacceptable impact on the historic and natural environment and the capacity of essential infrastructure.

- 4.4** A Settlement Boundary, illustrated on Map 2, is defined for the town and conforms with that in the emerging Local Plan. In order to manage the potential impacts of growth, new development will be focused within the Settlement Boundary. This will ensure that the undeveloped rural countryside is preserved and remains largely undeveloped
- 4.5** There may be situations where it is necessary for development to take place outside the Settlement Boundary, but such development will be limited to that which is essential for the operation of existing rural businesses, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation and other uses appropriate to the locality that need to be located in the countryside. For the purposes of policy WM1 this would include development required by a utility company to fulfill their statutory obligations to their customers. However, this approach is not intended to restrict the conversion of existing agricultural buildings to residential uses, where any proposals meet government regulations and local planning policies for such conversions.



Map 2 - Settlement Boundary

Policy WM 1 - Planning Strategy

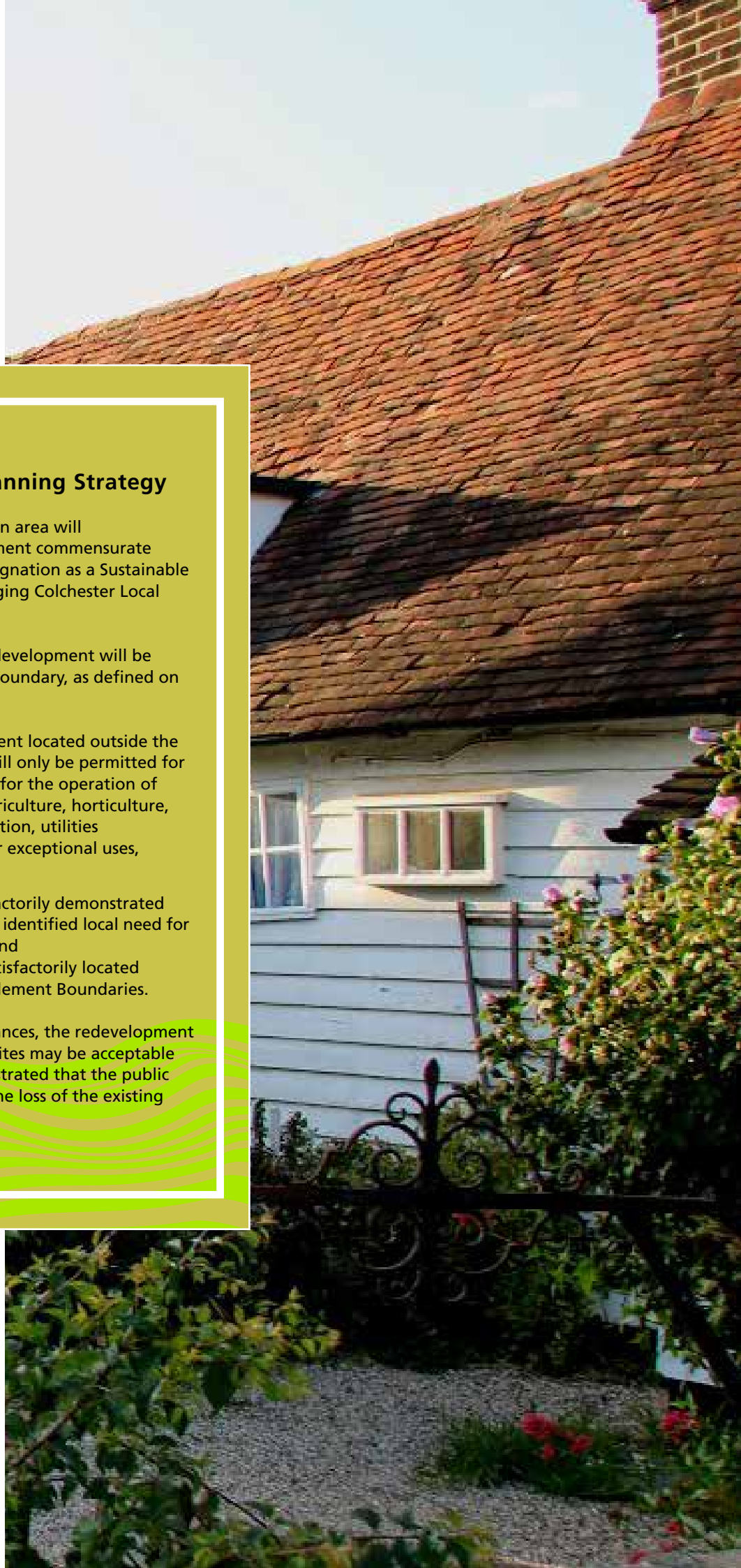
The Neighbourhood Plan area will accommodate development commensurate with West Mersea's designation as a Sustainable Settlement in the emerging Colchester Local Plan 2017 - 2033.

The focus for any new development will be within the Settlement Boundary, as defined on the Policies Map.

Proposals for development located outside the Settlement Boundary will only be permitted for those that are essential for the operation of an existing business, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation, utilities infrastructure and other exceptional uses, where:

- i) it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that there is an identified local need for the proposal; and
- ii) it cannot be satisfactorily located within the Settlement Boundaries.

In exceptional circumstances, the redevelopment of existing brownfield sites may be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that the public benefit will outweigh the loss of the existing use.



5

HOUSING

Housing Objectives

- 1 - To ensure that new housing meets the need of West Mersea
- 2 - To ensure new housing is available, appropriate and accessible to people of all ages and circumstances in order to maintain a balanced and diverse population

Housing Growth

5.1 The Neighbourhood Plan makes provision for new housing in accordance with the content of the emerging Local Plan provision for at least 14,720 new homes across the whole borough between 2017 and 2033. Approximately half of this provision were already in the pipeline at the time the emerging Local Plan was

prepared. Policy SG2 and its associated table identifies that allocations for 200 additional homes are made for West Mersea. These allocations were determined by the Borough Council following a careful consideration of sites in their Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment.

5.2 The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to undermine the level of housing growth proposed in the emerging Local Plan, rather it adds greater certainty as to what matters to the local community when considering the type and location of new homes. These allocations were determined by the Borough Council following a careful consideration of sites in their Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment.

5.3 Of particular relevance is emerging Local Plan Policy SS12a, as reproduced below, which identifies two large sites for housing development, at Dawes Lane and at Brierley Paddocks.

Emerging Local Plan - Policy SS12a: West Mersea

In addition to the infrastructure and mitigation requirements identified in policy PP1, development will be supported on land within the areas identified on the policies map which contributes towards expanding Mersea Island Primary School, provides suitable landscaping to screen the development to minimise any negative impact on the surrounding landscape and protect the open rural character of land within the Coastal Protection Belt, and meets the requirements for each site indicated below. Housing on both sites should address local needs which will be detailed in the Neighbourhood Plan but are likely to include starter homes and single storey dwellings.

Dawes Lane

Development will be supported which provides:

- (i) 100 new dwellings of a mix and type of housing to be compatible with surrounding development;
- (ii) Public Open Space, including sports pitches;
- (iii) Children's play area/land for a sports pavilion if identified in the Neighbourhood Plan;
- (iv) A single site access off Dawes Lane.

Brierley Paddocks

Development will be supported which provides:

- (i) 100 new dwellings of a mix and type of housing to be compatible with surrounding development; A satisfactory vehicular access;
- (ii) New public open space; and
- (iii) Community facilities if identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.

There are three existing designated Local Economic Areas in Mersea as shown on the policies map that will continue to be safeguarded for this use. Any future development proposals at these sites will be required to comply with policies SG4.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the generic Neighbourhood Planning Policy SG8 and the West Mersea Neighbourhood Plan, once adopted.

5.4 Having regard to both the content and the advanced stage of the emerging Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan acknowledges that the housing growth in West Mersea to 2033 will amount to around 200 new homes by 2033. It also recognises that the Borough Council undertook a robust and appropriate assessment of potential sites before coming to the decision to allocate the sites at Dawes Lane and Brierley Paddocks for development.

5.5 Planning permission was granted for a net increase of 100 dwellings at Brierley Paddocks in May 2020 and in February 2021 construction commenced on site. The site is therefore not allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan and the housing requirement subsequently reduced to around 100 dwellings. While Policy SS12a of the emerging Local Plan identifies two sites to deliver this growth, the Neighbourhood Plan does not rule out additional housing being developed as long as the site is located within the defined Settlement Boundary and can be satisfactorily accommodated on the site without having a detrimental impact on:

- the amenity of nearby residents,
- existing infrastructure including highways, and
- the natural and historic environment.

Such sites might take the form of infill plots between existing properties or the redevelopment of sites as long as they're located within the Settlement Boundary. Due to the unplanned nature of such sites, it is not possible to identify how many additional homes might come forward through this approach. At 1 April 2019 there were 20 dwellings with planning permission but yet to be completed in West Mersea according to the Borough Council Housing Land Supply report. All of these dwellings were on sites with a maximum of three house per site. It is not unreasonable to expect such a trend to continue over the lifetime of this Plan, albeit that the number could diminish as opportunities for infill and windfall sites are depleted.

5.6 The emerging Local Plan recognises that the Neighbourhood Plan has the opportunity to add more detail to the planning policies for the Dawes Lane and Brierley Paddocks sites to reflect locally identified needs and circumstances. However, given the advanced status of the Brierley Paddocks site, the Neighbourhood Plan has focused on the local characteristics and location of the Dawes Lane site as well as the wishes of the community in identifying more detailed requirements, as set out in the following paragraphs and Policy WM 3.

Policy WM 2 - Housing Development

This Plan provides for approximately 100 additional dwellings to be developed in the Neighbourhood Plan area between 2020 and 2033, as identified in paragraph 14.195 of the emerging Local Plan. This growth will be met through the site allocation in Policy WM3.

In addition, brownfield "windfall" sites and infill plots within the Settlement Boundary that come forward during the plan period and are not identified in the Plan will be supported where they comply with the relevant policies in the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan.

Land at Dawes Lane

5.7 The site, totalling 10.2 hectares of which 5.2 hectares is open space to the north of the development, together with a small amenity area to the south, is illustrated on Map 3, and located on the north-eastern edge of the town adjoining recent development at Barrow Mews and Stable Mews. To the west are the town's main sports facilities while there is no defined northern boundary meaning that any development is going to create a hard, urban edge abutting the surrounding open countryside.

5.8 In June 2020 Colchester Borough Council resolved to approve an outline planning application for 100 dwellings and land for community uses, public open space and landscaping in accordance with the allocation in the emerging Local Plan. The resolution to approve was subject to the applicants entering into a Section 106 Planning Agreement and, at the time of the publication of this Draft Neighbourhood Plan, the decision had yet to be issued.

5.9 Given the resolution to approve the planning application, the Neighbourhood Plan cannot go against this decision. However, as the details of the development have yet to be approved, the Neighbourhood Plan does provide additional guidance as to the nature and form that the development should take.



Map 3 - Land at Dawes Lane

5.10 The following potential impacts have been

identified that will need to be addressed in considering how the site will be developed:

- i visual impact of development on longer range views towards West Mersea from the north.
- ii reducing impact of new housing on existing properties to the south.
- iii providing safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle links to services and facilities in the town.
- iv ensuring that the housing is of a size and form to meet the identified needs of current and future residents.

5.11 The Borough Council's Urban Design Consultant, in commenting on the planning application, noted that:

- Placemaking: the Design & Access Statement and the Indicative Layout provide little indication of how the development would build-in a sense of place, with character. This could in part be addressed by attention being paid to the more specific issues below.
- SuDS strategy: a more integrated approach,

in line with the Essex SuDS Design Guide and the SuDS Manual C753. These

both point to the need to provide a management train and keep water on the surface as close as possible to where it falls. A single large retention basin at the edge of the site is generally considered to be poor practice.

- Connectivity: The elongated retention basin on the southern boundary serves to disconnect the site from existing residential areas to the south
- Manual for Streets: highways design should seek to benefit from the flexibility allowed for in Manual for Streets which has been adopted by Essex County Highways Authority. Strict reliance on DB32 geometry with fixed junction radii and carriageway/footpath widths is anathema to character.
- Mixed Use: the site is designated for residential use however dwellings could facilitate home-working with minor design modifications.

5.12 With the above in mind, the following development principles will need to be addressed by development proposals for the site:

- i A new woodland barrier is required to form the northern boundary of the site and to form a meaningful screen of the site from the open countryside to the north.

- ii Bungalows should be built along the northern extent of the developable area to help mitigate the impact of the residential element of the development on the open countryside and long-range views from the north.
- iii Across the whole southern boundary of the site a natural bund/green barrier, reflecting that of the Wellhouse Green development to the west, is to be provided to minimise impact on residential amenity to the south and, if required, to incorporate sustainable drainage facilities.
- iv Vehicular access should only be provided from Dawes Lane and there should be no vehicle access from the existing housing to the south.
- v There will be a need to ensure that safe and convenient pedestrian and cycle links are provided between the site and East Road, without requiring pedestrians to walk in the road, and to the children's play area on Wellhouse Estate.
- vi A footpath link, which is not on the public highway, connecting to the bridleway to the north of the site should be provided in order to facilitate recreational trips into the countryside and mitigate potential recreational disturbance on designated habitats elsewhere on the island.

Policy WM 3 - Land at Dawes Lane

Development of land at Dawes Lane, including the provision of 5.2 hectares of open space and as identified in Map 3 and on the Policies Map, should be undertaken in accordance with the conditions attached to outline planning consent (ref 200351), unless that consent is superseded by a later approval. In considering the detail of how the site will be developed, the matters below should be taken into account:

Development Principles:

- i) Developers should demonstrate, via a Landscape Character Assessment, that mitigation measures will be put in place to protect the rural and coastal landscape and ensure that highly valued views and vistas, as identified on the Policies Map, are maintained.
- ii) A woodland strip sufficient to provide a natural screen to mitigate the visual impact of the development and provide a windbreak shall be provided across the whole northern boundary of the site. Bungalows should be built along the northern extent of the developable area to help mitigate the impact of the development on the open countryside and long-range views from the north.
- iii) Across the whole southern boundary of the site a natural bund/green barrier, reflecting that of the Wellhouse Green development to the west, is to be provided to minimise impact on residential amenity to the south and, if required, to incorporate sustainable drainage facilities.

Housing:

- iv) The development should provide for a mixture of two and three bedroom houses and bungalows, as identified in the WMNHP Housing Needs Survey, unless it can be demonstrated that the latest publicly available housing needs information for the Plan area identify a need for a different mix.

Access:

- v) A single site vehicular access shall be provided from Dawes Lane.
- vi) Direct pedestrian and cycle access shall be provided between the development and East Road, without requiring pedestrians to walk in the road, and to the children's play area on Wellhouse Estate.
- vi) Provision should be made to provide an off-site link, without requiring pedestrians to walk in the road, between the site to the bridleway to the north in order to offset and mitigate any potential recreational disturbance on protected habitats elsewhere.

Affordable Housing

5.13 The policies in the emerging Local Plan provide an up-to-date policy approach to the delivery of affordable housing in West Mersea and have been informed by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. As such, 30% of new dwellings (including conversions) on housing developments of more than 10 dwellings should be provided as affordable housing (normally on site). At a local level, the West Mersea Housing Survey, undertaken as part of the Neighbourhood Plan preparation, identified that of those people likely to move in the future, 50% were looking for two-bedroomed dwellings.

Paddocks, the development would need to conform to such policy.

5.16 The development at Dawes Lane (Policy WM3) makes provision for starter homes and it is expected that other qualifying proposals should also provide around 10% of the affordable housing as starter homes in accordance with the Government definition.

Policy WM 4 - Affordable Housing in Housing Developments

In line with Policy DM8 of the emerging Colchester Local Plan, 30% of new dwellings (including conversions) on housing developments of more than 10 dwellings should be provided as affordable housing (normally on site) in accordance with the definition in the NPPF. Around 10% of the affordable housing provision shall meet the government definition of “starter homes”.

For sites where an alternative level of affordable housing is proposed below the target, proposals will need to be supported by evidence in the form of a viability appraisal.

In exceptional circumstances, where high development costs undermine the viability of housing delivery, developers will be expected to demonstrate an alternative affordable housing provision.

The Local Planning Authority will require developments to integrate affordable housing and market housing, with a consistent standard of quality design and public spaces, to create mixed and sustainable communities. The affordable housing provision should proportionately reflect the mix of market units unless otherwise specified by the Local Planning Authority. In schemes over 15 units the affordable housing should be provided in more than one single parcel. Elsewhere the affordable housing mix on any site should normally be “pepper potted” throughout the scheme in groups, the size and location of which should be discussed and agreed with the Local Planning Authority.

5.14 The West Mersea Housing Needs Assessment identified a need for affordable home ownership. The NPPF definition for affordable homes includes starter homes, which are currently defined in the Housing and Planning act 2016. They are homes that are:

- available for purchase by ‘qualifying first-time buyers’ only, defined as people who don’t already own a home and who are aged 23-40;
- to be sold at a discount of at least 20% of their market value, and always for less than the price cap (£250,000 outside London).

5.15 At the time of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Government were consulting on the “First Homes” initiative. The consultation stated that “First Homes will be sold with a minimum discount of 30 per cent off the market price, but local areas will be able to set a larger discount to ensure the homes are affordable to local people.” Should the First Homes initiative translate into Government planning policy before planning consent is granted at Dawes Lane and Brierley

5.17 Granting planning permission on an exceptional basis for affordable housing on land next to but outside the defined Settlement Boundary, is one way to provide affordable housing which will continue to meet local needs, through small-scale schemes, including entry level homes for purchase on “rural exception sites” outside the Settlement Boundary where housing would not normally be permitted. In order to deliver affordable housing through “exception sites” the following are required:

- a need for affordable housing has to be established, and
- a willing landowner has to come forward who is prepared to sell land at a price significantly below the market value for housing land, and
- a registered social landlord (housing association) needs to come forward, which is willing to work with the Town Council and Borough Council to fund and manage a scheme.

5.18 Where a “rural exception” site is proposed for development, it must be demonstrated that there is an identified local need, and that the site is suitable to meet that local need. In exceptional circumstances, it may be appropriate to permit an element of open market housing to facilitate the delivery of the affordable housing. This is in accordance with paragraph 77 of the NPPF which states that local authorities should consider whether this approach would help to provide additional affordable housing. The exceptional circumstances, where a small number of market homes will be permitted could include, for example, where there is insufficient government grant available, and it is demonstrated, through financial appraisal, that the open market housing is essential to enable the delivery of the affordable housing. In these cases, the applicant would need to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Borough Council, that the inclusion of open market housing is the minimum necessary to enable the delivery of the affordable housing and is not being developed to generate uplift in land values for the landowner. This could be demonstrated through

the provision of affordability/profitability modelling data. Where an element of open market housing is proposed as part of an affordable housing exception site, it should be sympathetic to the form and character of the settlement and in accordance with local needs. Local needs can vary, and it could be that smaller market homes are required to meet the needs of first-time buyers or people wishing to downsize to a smaller home. This would need to be established at the time in consultation with the Borough Council’s Housing Service.

House Sizes

5.19 The Housing Needs Survey identified a need for one and two bedroomed properties in West Mersea. The most recent reliable data about house sizes is contained in the 2011 Census. It identifies that the town has a good proportion of smaller homes when compared with other parishes across Colchester Borough (not including Colchester itself). However, as average household sizes continue to fall so the demand

Policy WM 5 - Affordable Housing on Exception Sites

Proposals for the development of small-scale affordable housing schemes on rural exception sites outside but adjoining the Settlement Boundary, where housing would not normally be permitted by other policies, will be supported where there is a proven local need and provided that the housing:

- i. remains affordable in perpetuity; and
- ii. is for people that are in housing need because they are unable to buy or rent properties in West Mersea at open-market prices; and
- iii. is offered, in the first instance, to people with a demonstrated local connection, as defined by the Colchester Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Where there is no need, a property should then be offered to those with a demonstrated need for affordable housing in neighbouring villages.

These restrictions should be delivered through a legal agreement attached to the planning consent for the housing. Applications for such development will be considered in relation to the appearance and character of the surrounding area, the potential impact on residential amenity and highway safety.

To be acceptable, proposals should demonstrate that a local need exists which cannot be met by applying normal planning policy for the provision of affordable homes in association with market housing.

Any application for affordable housing in respect of this policy should be accompanied by a detailed assessment of need and the accommodation proposed should contribute to meeting this proven need.

In exceptional circumstances, a small number of market homes will be permitted where it can be demonstrated:

- a) that no other means of funding the construction of the affordable homes is available; and
- b) the market housing is subsidiary to the affordable housing element of the proposal and the amount of market housing required is, as demonstrated through a viability assessment, the minimum required to deliver the affordable housing.

Where sites for affordable housing outside the settlement boundary are brought forward with an element of market housing, both housing tenures should be built to the same design standards and contribute towards the character of the area

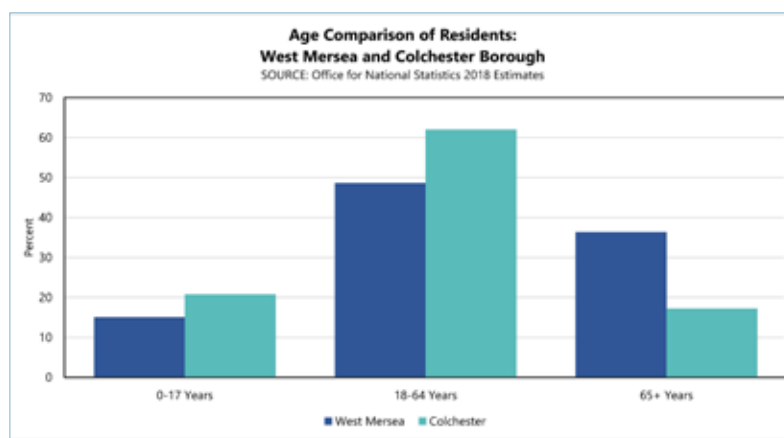
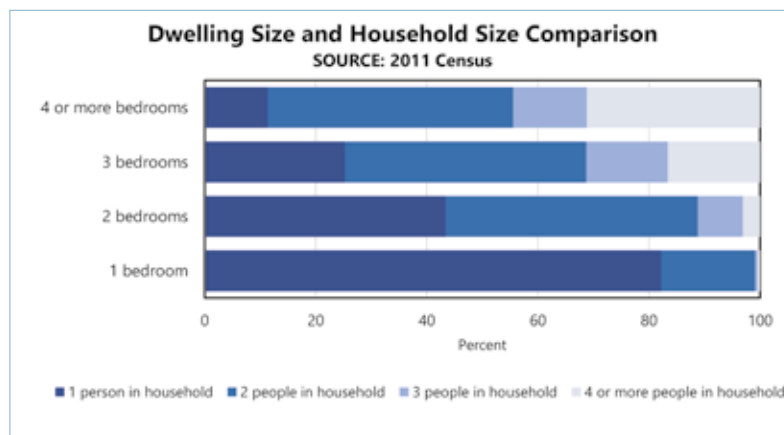
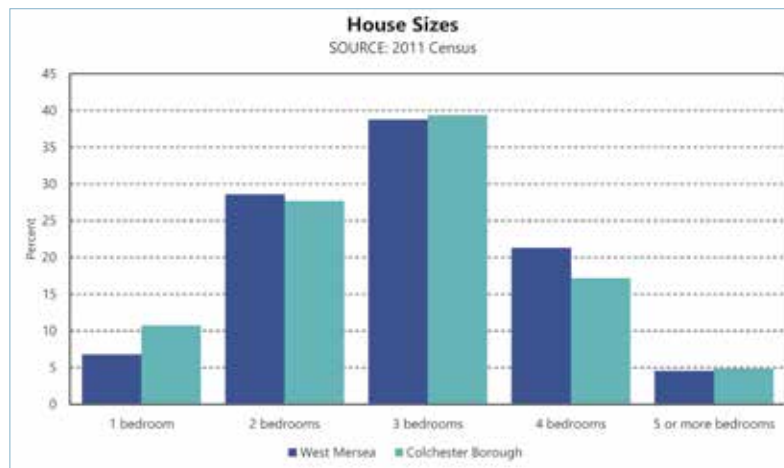
for smaller properties will increase. The 2011 Census identified that over 50% of houses with four or more bedrooms were only occupied by two people. The construction of additional smaller properties, where room sizes meet modern needs for those downsizing, might help to free up larger properties for those families that wish to remain on the island but are faced with a lack of available properties.

Policy WM 6 - Housing Mix

In all housing developments of ten or more homes, there shall be an emphasis on providing a higher proportion of one and two bedroomed houses and bungalows within the scheme, unless it can be demonstrated that the particular circumstances relating to the tenure of the housing dictate otherwise or where such provision is demonstrated to not be in accordance with the latest available housing needs information for the Plan Area.

5.20 A distinct characteristic of the town is the number of bungalows and chalet dwellings. However, over recent years the stock of this type of dwelling has gradually been eroded as permissions have been granted to extend the dwellings upwards. The impact of this is two-fold, firstly by eroding the highly sort after stock of bungalows, in particular and, secondly, the detrimental impact on the character of the area within which the plot sits. The town has a significantly higher proportion of elderly residents when compared with the Borough as a whole, as illustrated in the figure. With this statistic in mind, it is essential to retain accessible dwellings, such as bungalows, to meet the need of an ageing population.

5.21 Proposals for the conversion of bungalows or 1½ storey dwellings to two or more storey will generally be resisted unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the area by resulting in a taller dwelling in area that is otherwise predominantly single or 1½ storey dwellings.



Policy WM 7 - Loss of bungalows and chalet dwellings

Planning applications that would result in the conversion of single storey or 1½ storey dwellings to two or more storey dwellings will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on the character of the vicinity and the amenity of nearby residents by way of overlooking and loss of light.

Housing Space Standards

5.22 In March 2015, the government introduced a 'Nationally Described Space Standard', which sets out detailed minimum standards for the design of housing.

The current standard requires that:

- the dwelling provides at least the gross internal floor area and built-in storage area set out in the table below;
- a dwelling with two or more bedspaces has at least one double (or twin) bedroom;
- in order to provide one bedspace, a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5m² and is at least 2.15m wide;
- in order to provide two bedspaces, a double (or twin bedroom) has a floor area of at least 11.5m²;
- one double (or twin bedroom) is at least 2.75m wide and every other double (or twin) bedroom is at least 2.55m wide;
- any area with a headroom of less than 1.5m is not counted within the Gross Internal Area unless used solely for storage (if the area under the stairs is to

be used for storage, assume a general floor area of 1m² within the Gross Internal Area);

- any other area that is used solely for storage and has a headroom of 900- 1500mm (such as under eaves) is counted at 50% of its floor area, and any area lower than 900mm is not counted at all;
- a built-in wardrobe counts towards the Gross Internal Area and bedroom floor area requirements, but should not reduce the effective width of the room below the minimum widths set out above. The built-in area in excess of 0.72m² in a double bedroom and 0.36m² in a single bedroom counts towards the built-in storage requirement; and
- the minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area.

5.23 Externally, it is also important that homes meet modern day requirements for the storage of wheelie bins and cycles. Without sufficient and appropriate space reserved for these uses, the consequence can be added clutter and a deterrent in the use of cycles as a mode of travel.

A summary table is provided below.

Number of bedrooms (b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
		Square metres			
1b	1p	39 (37)*			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

Where a one bedroom, one person dwelling has a shower room instead of a bathroom, the floor area may be reduced from 39 square metres to 37 square metres, as shown bracketed

Policy WM 8 - Measures for New Housing Development

All new dwellings shall achieve appropriate internal space through adherence to the latest Nationally Described Space Standards. Dwellings should also make adequate provision for the covered storage of wheelie bins and cycles and should meet the current adopted car parking standards.



important habitats and will, therefore, not be supported. There may, however, be instances where sites last used as a houseboat mooring might be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that the re-instatement of an existing houseboat would avoid impact on the character and setting of the conservation area and, most importantly, would not have an unacceptable impact on the internationally protected areas and protected species therein. A Habitats Regulations Assessment and, where appropriate, an Appropriate Assessment will be required to be submitted alongside all proposals within these areas as the installation of new boats could potentially physically damage the salt-marsh and also reduce water quality if they do not have adequate on-site sewage/pump out systems in place.

Houseboats

5.24 A distinct characteristic of the shoreline along Coast Road is the presence of houseboats. Such dwellings are only suitable for the needs and housing expectations of a small sector of the population, but they contribute to the diversity of the town and a different style of living. The area where the houseboats are currently located is within the West Mersea Conservation Area and wholly within the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation and Blackwater Estuary Special Protection Area. Development proposals on the seaward side of Coast Road will need to have regard to the need to protect and enhance the protected habitats and traditional maritime character of the designated areas.

5.25 The West Mersea Neighbourhood Plan definition of a houseboat is:

A house 'boat' by definition is a seagoing vessel or boat that was designed to go to sea under its own propulsion using sail or power or both. The design, function and form should be of an original seagoing vessel or boat having a decked structure. Subsequent sympathetic modifications or conversion to a suitable residential 'house' boat use may follow. Thereby preserving the existing traditional and historical maritime use of the West Mersea foreshore of existing houseboats berths situated only in channels running within the unique habitat of the restricted and highly protected salt marsh areas. Maximum Length of vessel 30 metres, maximum width 7 metres and maximum of two levels/storeys in height including one level below deck.

5.26 The provision of new moorings for houseboats in coastal areas of West Mersea would have a detrimental impact on the landscape and internationally

5.27 Map 4 illustrates the area where, subject to the criteria in Policy WM 9, proposals for new houseboats may be supported. The general character of the houseboat area should be maintained since this adds to the vibrancy of the community. However, the houseboats should not have a negative impact upon the natural environment and should respect the unique habitat within which they are situated. The area should be kept clear of waste materials and storage solutions should be found to make the area tidier and more sympathetic towards the nature conservation requirements. Proposals will need to maintain the open feel of a foreshore community and continue to allow excellent views across the marshes for, not only, houseboat owners but also the nearby residents and visitors to the water.



Map 4 - Houseboats

Policy WM 9 - Houseboats

Proposals for new moorings for permanent residential houseboats will not be permitted in coastal areas including Coast Road because of their landscape and environmental impact on the internationally designated habitats.

Proposals to replace an existing houseboat or fill a vacant site that is identified on Map 4 as being a recently used site maybe supported, subject to an installation method statement being submitted which avoids impacts to saltmarsh habitats and which satisfy all other policy criteria.

In considering proposals for houseboats and associated development, the following matters will be taken into account:

- i. the proposal should maintain the general character of the houseboat area;
- ii. houseboat proposals should not have a detrimental impact upon the natural environment but should respect the unique habitat within which they are situated;
- iii. the storage of waste and any associated domestic paraphernalia would not have a harmful effect on the character or setting of the surrounding area.
- iv. the open views across the marshes are not significantly harmed as a result of the proposal

Proposals for houseboat projects (replacement boats, ancillary jetties and any structures) will be required include sufficient information to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment and, where necessary, an Appropriate Assessment. Proposals should demonstrate that they have, or are capable of providing, adequate on-site sewage/pump-out systems in order to mitigate potential damage to the salt marsh and a reduction of water quality.

Applications for infrastructure to support existing houseboats including jetties, sheds, platforms and fences and for replacement houseboats or houseboat alterations considered to result in material alterations will be considered on the basis of their scale and impact on surrounding amenity, environment and landscape.



6

OPEN SPACES, SPORT AND RECREATION

Objectives

- 3 - To preserve and promote open spaces and recreation
- 4 - To provide a balance between the different types of open space
- 5 - To make parks and open spaces accessible to a wider range of people
- 6 - To provide for more attractive communal areas for informal and formal recreation

Protection of Existing Open Space, Sport and Recreation Sites

6.1 Opportunities for participating in exercise are important to the health of residents and reducing pressures on the health service. The Neighbourhood Plan can play an important role in making sure that there are sufficient and adequate services in West Mersea to meet the needs of current and future residents. As the population of the town grows there is likely to be a demand for further facilities and Policy WM 3 makes provision for the extension of The Glebe to enable this. However, it should be noted that the 0 -19 demographic age group is falling. The Office for National Statistics figure for

2018 is 1,241 whereas the 2011 census it was 1329. Conversely, the 60 and over age group has gone up to 43% of the population from 39.9%. It is also important to safeguard what we already have, including formal sports facilities such as play pitches and indoor sports facilities.

6.2 As part of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, an Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study has been prepared and is available to view on the Neighbourhood Plan website. The Study identifies a range of open space types according to their function. The Neighbourhood Plan protects existing open space, sport and recreation sites, enabling them to be enhanced where there will be no significant detrimental impact on the locality, including the amenity of nearby residents. The Plan also protects facilities from being lost unless it can be adequately demonstrated that the facility is surplus to requirements or that new facilities of an equal or better size, quality and accessibility is being provided.

6.3 Appendix 1 provides a brief description of the Open Space, Sports and Recreation areas including projected additions from the recently commenced Brierley Paddocks housing development and Dawes Lane (Policy WM3) in the Plan Area, including location maps of the sites. The full report can be found on the Neighbourhood Plan website.

Policy WM 10 - Open Space, Sport and Recreation Sites

Proposals for the provision, enhancement and/or expansion of sport or recreation open space or facilities, including allotments, will be permitted subject to compliance with other Policies in the Development Plan.

Existing open space, sport and recreation sites are identified on the Policies Map, Appendix 2 and are detailed in the West Mersea Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study.

Development which will result in the loss of existing open space, sport or recreation sites or facilities, including allotments will not be allowed unless:

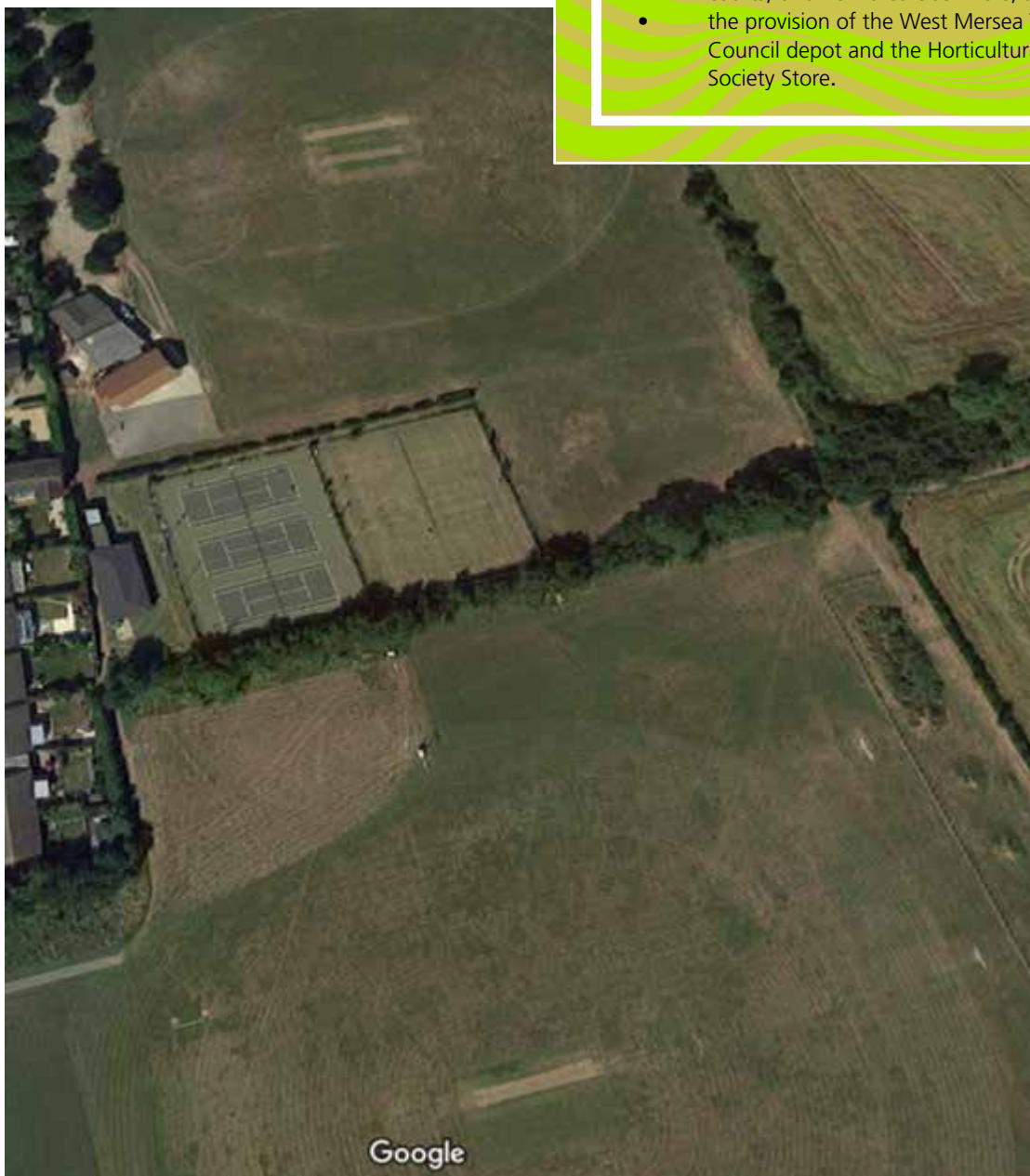
- a. it can be demonstrated that the space or facility is surplus to requirement against the local planning authority's standards for the particular location, and the proposed loss will not result in a likely shortfall during the plan period; or
- b. replacement for the space or facilities lost is made available, of at least equivalent quantity and quality, and in an equally accessible location to meet the needs of users of the existing space or facility.

Any replacement provision should take account of the needs of West Mersea and the current standards of open space and sports facility provision adopted by the local planning authority.

Clubhouses, pavilions, car parking and ancillary facilities must be of a high standard of design and internal layout. The location of such facilities must be well related and sensitive to the topography, character and uses of the surrounding area, particularly when located in or close to residential areas. Proposals which give rise to intrusive floodlighting will not be permitted.

The Glebe Sports Grounds

- 6.4** The Glebe provides a comprehensive facility for formal sports and is home to rugby, football, cricket and tennis clubs. The proposed extension of The Glebe provides an opportunity to improve and expand facilities in order to address current and projected needs and to deliver improved facilities. Policy WM11 identifies the initiatives that will be supported.



Policy WM 11 - The Glebe Sports Grounds

In association with the addition of further open space provided by Policy WM3, opportunities will be taken at The Glebe for:

- the reorganisation of the formal sports facilities;
- the creation of additional parking;
- the provision of a MUGA with artificial surface, protective fencing and floodlighting;
- upgrades to the existing pavilion, or a new pavilion and sports & community room;
- an area for a Croquet pitch, either as joint area use on the grass tennis courts, or a new area elsewhere; and
- the provision of the West Mersea Town Council depot and the Horticultural Society Store.

7

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT

Objective

- 7 - To ensure that any proposed development provides footpath and cycleway links to the town, coastal and recreational areas to encourage residents to walk and cycle, easing congestion, pollution and parking problems.

- 7.1 Like most towns and villages, West Mersea is heavily reliant on the car to get around, although the 2011 Census identified that 13.5% of households didn't have access to a car. The island is an important destination for tourism, thus creating additional car journeys to access holiday accommodation or visitor facilities.
- 7.2 It is important that future development seeks to enable easy movement by non-car modes such as walking, cycling and buses so that access to services and facilities is made easier and that the impact of journeys generated by population and tourism growth can be managed. Where new development takes place, opportunities should be taken to ensure that safe access to the site by foot and cycle can be achieved, in particular to provide links to services and facilities in the town.
- 7.3 There are regular bus services from the island to Colchester and it is essential that these are maintained and improved through the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan. Given the age profile of the town,

it will be essential that public transport is accessible for those who need it. Improved information at bus stops, including real-time information systems can greatly enhance the user experience and encourage greater use of the service.

- 7.4 The Residents' Survey undertaken as part of the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan identified a number of locations where respondents found it difficult to cross the road. The following were the locations most highlighted:

Location	% age of respondents identifying this location
Queens Corner	52.4%
Barfield Road - Tesco Corner	41.9%
High Street / Post Office	29.6%
High Street / Church Road Corner	29.1%
Coast Road / Monkey Steps	26.1%
Barfield Road - School / Coop	25.9%
Yorick Road / High Street	24.7%

- 7.5 Around the town, initiatives to improve the ability to safely walk and cycle are essential if residents and visitors alike are to be encouraged to reduce the use of cars. The Neighbourhood Plan has identified strategic routes and improvements both on the routes and links to them will be sought through developer contributions, where appropriate, or investment through County Council highways investment programmes. The list of initiatives is included as Appendix 2 of the Neighbourhood Plan.



Policy WM 12 - Development Access

All new developments should seek to ensure accessibility for sustainable modes of transport.

Proposals should, where appropriate:

- i Give priority to the movement of people walking and cycling;
- ii Create safe, secure, convenient and attractive layouts which minimise conflicts between traffic, cyclists and pedestrians;
- iii Provide links to and where necessary improve the surrounding walking, cycling and public transport networks;
- iv Provide high quality public transport facilities;
- v Incorporate charging facilities for electric and other ultra-low emission vehicles, including one charging point per off-road parking space for new dwellings;
- vi Ensure accessibility for those with impaired mobility; and
- vii Accommodate the safe and efficient delivery of goods and services.

Access to all development should be created in a manner which maintains the right and safe passage of all highway users. Where development requires a new road or road access it should be designed to give high priority to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

Where new access is created, or an existing access is widened through an existing hedgerow, a new hedgerow of native species shall be planted on the splay returns into the site to maintain the appearance and continuity of hedgerows in the vicinity.

Proposals that improve traffic flow and/or avoid increased congestion on existing roads and junctions will be supported and development will only be allowed where there is physical and environmental capacity to accommodate the type and amount of traffic generated in a safe manner. Development that generates significant amounts of movement will require a Transport Statement or Transport Assessment in line with the thresholds set in the latest Essex County Council development management policies relating to highways. Where lower than standard trip rates are proposed development will be expected to demonstrate through a package of sustainable transport measures that the proposed trip rates can be achieved. A masterplan approach to assess cumulative impacts may be required in complex locations with closely related and located developments.

- 7.6** The provision of a cycle route to Colchester, originally proposed by West Mersea Town Council, and now subject to a petition to Essex County Council and Colchester Borough Council, would be supported and encouraged.



8

BUSINESS

Objectives

- 8 - To preserve the long-term viability of the harbour for maritime, commercial and leisure activities
- 9 - To support the sustainable development of satisfactory, long-term employment on the island for Mersea residents.

- 8.1 West Mersea plays an important role in the economy of Mersea Island as a whole and the wider area. At the time of the 2011 Census, 44% of the population were in employment although one-third of these were in part-time employment.
- 8.2 The main "industries" of employment of residents, as defined by the Census, were:
 - Wholesale and retail trade and motor vehicle repairs 17.1%
 - Construction 12.2%

- Health and social work 11.2%
- Education 10.4%

Almost 50% of those in employment in 2011 travelled in excess of 10 kilometres to get to work while 15% worked mainly from home.

- 8.3 The provision of opportunities to work in the town is an important factor that will contribute to the sustainability of West Mersea. There are currently four significant locations for work, namely Waldegraves Farm Business Park, The Boat Yards on Coast Road, Rushmere Close and Haycocks Lane. The retention of these sites for employment uses will be supported and proposals for employment related development will be supported provided there is no detrimental impact on the local landscape character, the amenity of local residents and that traffic generated by the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the local road network.
- 8.4 Given the need to maintain opportunities for employment, the loss of employment premises will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that specific criteria, as identified in Policy WM 13 can be met.

Policy WM 13 - Retention of existing employment centres

The retention and intensification of employment premises at:

- i Waldegraves Farm Business Park,
- ii The Boat Yards, Coast Road,
- iii Rushmere Close, and
- iv Haycocks Lane,

as identified on the Policies Map, will be supported provided proposals do not have a detrimental impact on the local landscape character, the amenity of residents and would not generate unacceptable levels of vehicular traffic on local roads.

Proposals for non-employment uses will only be permitted where:

- a there is a sufficient supply of alternative and suitable employment land available to meet local employment requirements; or
- b evidence can be provided that genuine attempts have been made to sell / let the site in its current use, and that no suitable and viable alternative employment uses can be found or are likely to be found in the foreseeable future; or
- c the existing use has created over-riding environmental problems (e.g. noise, odours or traffic) and permitting an alternative use would be a substantial environmental benefit that would outweigh the loss of an employment site; or
- d. an alternative use or mix of uses would assist in urban regeneration and offer greater community or sustainability benefits that would outweigh the loss of the employment; or
- e. the proposal is for an employment related support facility such as employment training / education, workplace creche or café.

- 8.5** Opportunities to provide new prospects for employment, especially by those starting out, will be encouraged. Although there is a significant proportion of the workforce working from home, as small businesses expand there may be a demand for workspaces to accommodate them. One such approach to enabling the formation and expansion of small business is through the provision of “co-operative workspaces” where facilities such as office space, meeting rooms and IT can be located. Proposals for such facilities in the town will be encouraged, especially in locations accessible by good quality walking and cycling networks.

Policy WM 14 - Co-operative workspaces

Proposals to provide a co-operative working space, by way of a communal ‘seedbed centre’, offering centralised office services & meeting rooms will be supported where it can be demonstrated that there will be no detrimental impact on

- i. the character of the area; and
- ii. residential amenity; and
- iii. the highways network

Community Aspiration 1

Initiatives for joint ventures which provide benefits of networking and reduced costs will be supported.

Marine Related Businesses

- 8.6** Fishing and oyster businesses, as well as sailing and boating activities on Mersea Island are especially important to the local economy as well as the character of Coast Road. However, the Coast Road environment is especially fragile given the variety of international designations covering the area, the important contribution the area makes to the tourist economy and the threat of sea level rise resulting from climate change. Locally, Coast Road is also a designated Conservation Area, placing further restrictions on the design and impact of any proposals.
- 8.7** The Neighbourhood Plan supports the retention of the fishing and oyster industry at West Mersea as well as activities that support sailing and boating activities where there will not be an unacceptable impact on the internationally designated sites, are appropriate in terms of the flood risk and would not result in a significant and detrimental increase in vehicular traffic on the island.

Policy WM 15 - Marine Services

Proposals that support the retention of the fishing and oyster industries, sailing and boating activities around Coast Road, the waterside and harbour, as identified on the Policies Map, will be supported where they:

- i. can demonstrate no likely significant effects on adjacent European sites or where impacts can be appropriately mitigated; and
- ii. will deliver or sustain social and economic benefits considered important to the wellbeing of the coastal communities; and
- iii. will not generate a significant increase in traffic; and
- iv. represent an appropriate use with regards to flood risk.

Town Centre

- 8.8** The retail economy continues to be under strict pressure as new forms of trading such as online shopping continues to evolve. There is currently a nucleus of shops and other town centre type businesses along Kingsland Road, Barfield Road, High Street, Yorick Road and Church Road and designated as a District Centre in the emerging Local Plan, which notes that:

“The centre’s retail offer is somewhat dispersed but relatively distinct owing to the diversity of independent retailers. It has a substantial walk-in catchment and is reasonably well served by bus.

Overall, the retail evidence confirms that West Mersea is a vital and viable centre within the limitations of its small scale and localised nature. The mix of uses and the high level of occupancy would suggest that it serves an important role in the retail hierarchy.”

- 8.9** In September 2020 the Government abolished the retail “use class” and merged those uses in to a wider encompassing Class E - Commercial, Business and Service. The change of use of shops to other uses in this class no longer requires planning consent. However, proposals for the loss of commercial, business or service uses will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that it will not have a detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.



Policy WM 16 - Town Centre

The Town Centre, as identified on the Policies Map, will be the focal point for main town centre uses such as retail, office, leisure and entertainment.

The change of use from Use Class E to other uses will only be supported where it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the vitality and viability of the defined Town Centre will not be harmed and where:

- a. the proposal will not remove existing or potential beneficial use of upper floors; and
- b. the proposal will not adversely affect the amenity of the surrounding area by virtue of noise, litter, congestion on pavements, or disturbance arising from late night opening.

Proposals to expand an existing retail use, retail service, community use, financial/ businesses service or a leisure service will be considered favourably where it can be demonstrated that the use is small scale proportionate to the role and function of such centres and will serve the basic needs of local communities.

Proposals will be required to demonstrate that they will not adversely affect residential amenity, particularly in terms of car parking, noise and hours of operation. Proposals should take every opportunity to promote sustainable travel behaviour.



9

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Objectives

- 10 -** To support maintenance and improvement of Water, Gas, Electricity, Broadband, Mobile Telephone, Waste Disposal and Recycling services, to provide satisfactory utility infrastructure, emphasising Mersea Island's unique situation.
- 11 -** To maintain the town centre's character and focal point for commerce and the community with its cafés, Community Centre and historical heritage.

Health

- 9.1** The key policy is to protect, maintain and improve Medical services and Social cohesion in West Mersea including encouraging individuals and groups to cooperate and assist each other, no matter what their circumstances. Maintaining and improving social inclusion, for example by actively dealing with loneliness, has been shown to reduce emergency and unplanned hospital admissions. Social mobility requires opportunities for individuals and groups to achieve their full potential in education and business.
- 9.2** The current West Mersea Surgery was built in 1978 and now, with the population increased by 37.8%, it is far too small for current needs even with the additional NHS-leased clinic in Barfield Road. In addition, the General Hospital, together with the Military Hospital which also served Mersea, in the centre of Colchester town, have closed down, and the hospital is now 2 miles to the North of the Town Centre, as is A & E, whereas Mersea Island lies 9 miles to the South necessitating journeys traversing a highly congested town bottleneck. Therefore a visit even to A & E is an hour via two buses and by car 35/40 minutes. It is sometimes necessary for the local lifeboat to be launched to transfer a patient to the mainland. The Air Ambulance is a regular visitor for emergencies, emphasising the reliance on public subscription to voluntary services.
- 9.3** There have been three attempts over the past fifteen years to replace the Medical Centre and all have failed for one reason or another. However, this remains a requirement of the adopted Local Plan to 2021 and will continue to be pursued. The Neighbourhood Plan recognises that there is little chance of the construction

of a new surgery in the centre of the Town and that land on the periphery, provided that is on the bus route, would be perfectly satisfactory.

- 9.4** There is also a need for a Daycare Centre attached to the Medical Practice for patients returning home from a stay in hospital who currently have to rely on after-care from the medical and social services. In some cases, where cover of sufficient intensity is not available, the stay in hospital is prolonged. A local Daycare Centre would conform to the NHS policy of integrated care systems that insure the vision of care closer to home. Further housing development in West Mersea has a potential impact upon the health services and facilities that are provided both on the island and across the wider area.
- 9.5** The Colchester Infrastructure Development Plan (2017) notes that a new Health Centre Hub is required in West Mersea to absorb proposed growth. The same document suggested that it would also involve relocation of existing West Mersea Surgery and that the total space requirement would be 600m² Gross Internal Area.
- 9.6** Land at Brierley Paddocks is reserved for health services as part of a condition in planning approval (Application reference 192136) and is the favoured location for the new Health Centre Hub..

Policy WM 17 - New Health Facilities

Proposals that increase the capacity of medical facilities within the Neighbourhood Plan Area will be supported where:

- i they are accessible by a range of modes of travel;
- ii the hours of operation would not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of residents in the vicinity of the site through, in particular, noise and traffic movements.

Land at Brierley Paddocks is reserved for health facilities as part of the outline planning consent for the site (Application reference 192136).

- 9.7** Healthy living can be promoted through the careful design of new development including its accessibility by foot or cycle. The potential impact of development on health and health services needs to be assessed to ensure that adequate services continue to be provided for the community as a whole. The Neighbourhood Plan, in line with the requirements of the emerging Local Plan, requires that Health Impact Assessments (HIA) should be produced to accompany all proposals for residential development in excess of 100 units, for non-residential development in excess of 2,500 square metres and for other developments where the proposal is likely to have a significant impact on health and wellbeing. For developments which have relatively little impact upon health services, an initial assessment may be sufficient to satisfy the requirements of this policy. For developments where an initial assessment indicates more significant health impacts, a comprehensive Health Impact Assessment (HIA) will be required.

Policy WM 18 - Health and Wellbeing

All development should be designed to help promote healthy lifestyles and avoid causing adverse impacts on public health through:

- i. Ensuring good access to health facilities and services;
- ii. Providing a healthy living environment where healthy lifestyles can be promoted including green space and creating attractive opportunities for activities including walking and cycling; and
- iii. Providing appropriate mitigation to avoid harmful emissions.

Health Impact Assessments (HIA) will be required for all residential development in excess of 100 units and non-residential development in excess of 2500 square metres and for other developments where the proposal is likely to have a significant impact on health and wellbeing. The purpose of the HIA will be to identify the potential health consequences of a proposal on a given population, maximise the positive health benefits and minimise potential adverse effects on health and inequalities. Any HIA must be prepared in accordance with up to date advice and best practice for such assessments.

Where appropriate, remedial measures required as a result of the HIA shall be required as part of the planning approval of the development concerned.

- 9.8** The Medical Practice is looking to establish an Adult Daycare facility within the new Medical Hub. Given the age profile of residents on the Island, this facility is strongly supported.

Community Aspiration 2

The Town Council will support Mersea Island Medical Practice in their negotiations to include a Daycare Centre within the new Medical Centre.

Education

- 9.9** In October 2019 Mersea Primary School had 391 on the school roll. Forecasts published by the County Council in January 2019 suggest that the school will reach capacity in 2024/25, it is presumed as a result of the growth planned in the emerging Local Plan. There may, therefore, need to increase the capacity of the Primary School to accommodate the forecast numbers if they cannot be managed in other ways, such as changing the admissions policy.
- 9.10** With no secondary education provision on the Island, children have to be bused either to Tiptree or Colchester. Additional housing development is likely to increase the demand for services over the coming years. And the Colchester Infrastructure Development Plan (2017) noted that to accommodate growth in Tiptree and Mersea, an additional form of entry at Thurstable School, Tiptree is required.

Policy WM 19 - Education Infrastructure Capacity

Proposals that generate additional school age children should demonstrate that there is sufficient capacity in all levels of the education system to support the development or that such capacity will be delivered to accommodate the need.

Where necessary, developer contributions will be required towards the construction and (where appropriate) land to secure new school places required as a result of the development.

Community Support Group, Clubs, Organisations and Societies

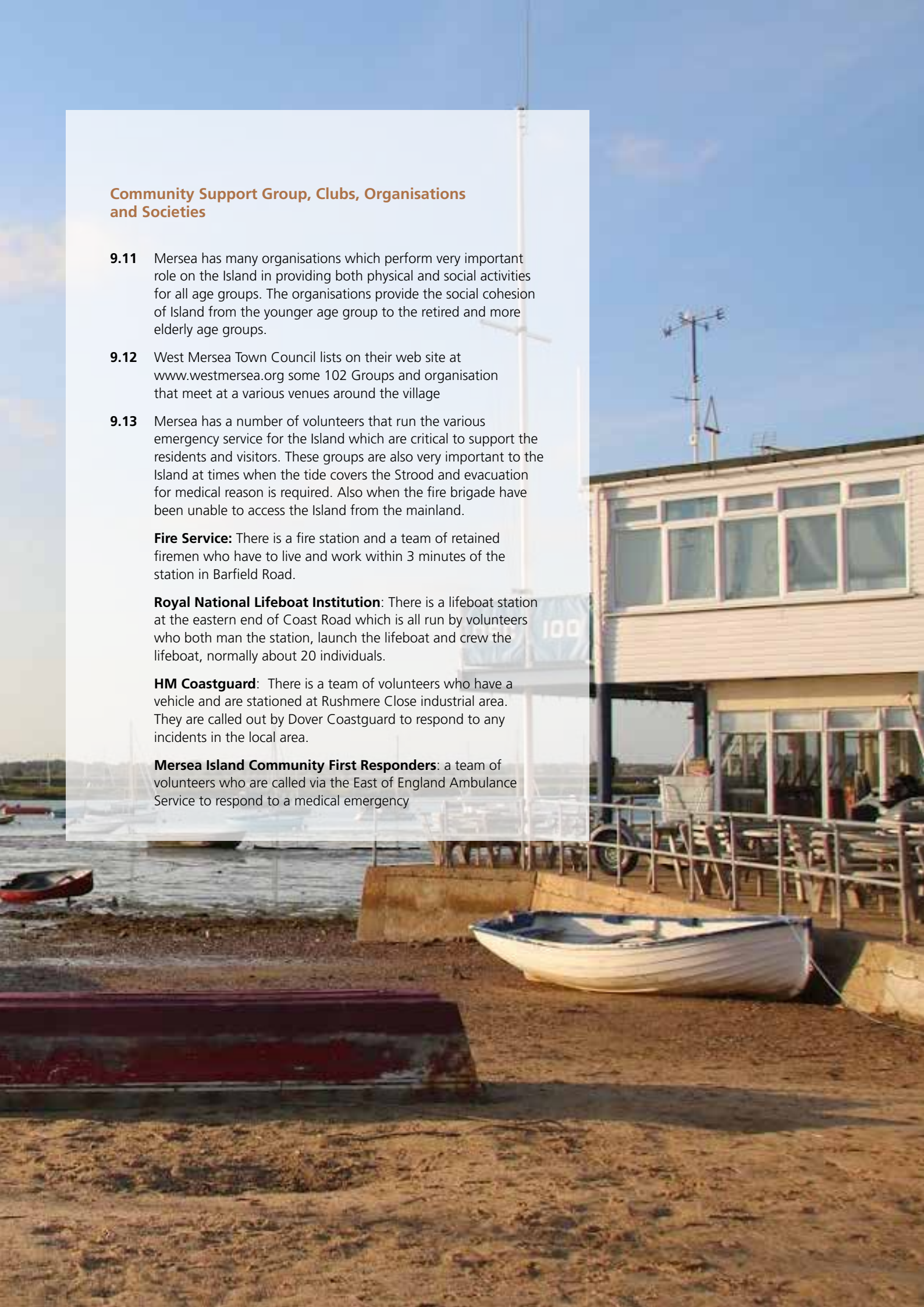
- 9.11** Mersea has many organisations which perform very important role on the Island in providing both physical and social activities for all age groups. The organisations provide the social cohesion of Island from the younger age group to the retired and more elderly age groups.
- 9.12** West Mersea Town Council lists on their web site at www.westmersea.org some 102 Groups and organisation that meet at a various venues around the village
- 9.13** Mersea has a number of volunteers that run the various emergency service for the Island which are critical to support the residents and visitors. These groups are also very important to the Island at times when the tide covers the Strood and evacuation for medical reason is required. Also when the fire brigade have been unable to access the Island from the mainland.

Fire Service: There is a fire station and a team of retained firemen who have to live and work within 3 minutes of the station in Barfield Road.

Royal National Lifeboat Institution: There is a lifeboat station at the eastern end of Coast Road which is all run by volunteers who both man the station, launch the lifeboat and crew the lifeboat, normally about 20 individuals.

HM Coastguard: There is a team of volunteers who have a vehicle and are stationed at Rushmere Close industrial area. They are called out by Dover Coastguard to respond to any incidents in the local area.

Mersea Island Community First Responders: a team of volunteers who are called via the East of England Ambulance Service to respond to a medical emergency





10

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, LANDSCAPE AND COASTAL PROTECTION

Objectives

- 12 -** To protect and enhance wildlife corridors and ensure that any new development meets the NPPF requirements.
- 13 -** To protect and enhance the international, nationally and locally designated habitats in their own rights and from the impact of new development.
- 14 -** To protect and enhance the unique landscape of the island from inappropriate development.

Protected Habitats

- 10.1** West Mersea is located in an area of the highest significance in terms of the natural environment. All of the coastline is covered by international, European and national wildlife designations. A key purpose of these designations is to protect breeding and non-breeding birds and coastal habitats. The coast is designated under the Habitats Regulations as part of the European Natura 2000 network. These are Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Ramsar sites.
- 10.2** The Borough Council has the duty, by virtue of being defined as a 'competent authority' under the Habitats Regulations, to ensure that planning application decisions comply with the Habitats Regulations. If the requirements of the Habitats Regulations are not met and impacts on Habitats sites are not mitigated, then development must not be permitted. The published Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for the emerging Local Plan has identified recreational disturbance as an issue for all of the Essex coastal SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites. Mitigation measures are therefore necessary to avoid these likely significant effects in-combination with other plans and projects.
- 10.3** The Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document by the Borough Council in 2019 and a Supplementary Planning Document was adopted in August 2020. It seeks to deliver the mitigation necessary to avoid the likely significant effects from the 'in-combination' impacts of residential development that is anticipated across Essex; thus protecting the Habitats sites on the Essex coast from adverse effect on site integrity. The RAMS approach is fair and seeks to mitigate the additional

recreational pressure in a way that ensures that those responsible for it, pay to mitigate it at a level consistent with the level of potential harm. As such, the Supplementary Planning Document sets out a tariff per new dwelling of £122.30 which is index linked with a base date of 2019. All new planning consents for housing in the Neighbourhood Area will be required to pay this tariff. In addition to payment of the RAMS tariff, all development sites over 100 dwellings or sites within 800m of habitats sites, should include provision of well-designed open space/green infrastructure, proportionate to its scale, to avoid likely significant effects from recreational disturbance alone. Such provisions can help minimise any predicted increase in recreational pressure to habitats sites by containing the majority of recreation within and around the development site, away from habitats sites. New Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANG) should include: high-quality, informal, semi-natural areas; a circular dog walking route of 2.7 km; dedicated 'dogs-off-lead' areas; signage/information leaflets to householders to promote these areas for recreation; dog waste bins; and a commitment to the long term maintenance and management of these provisions.

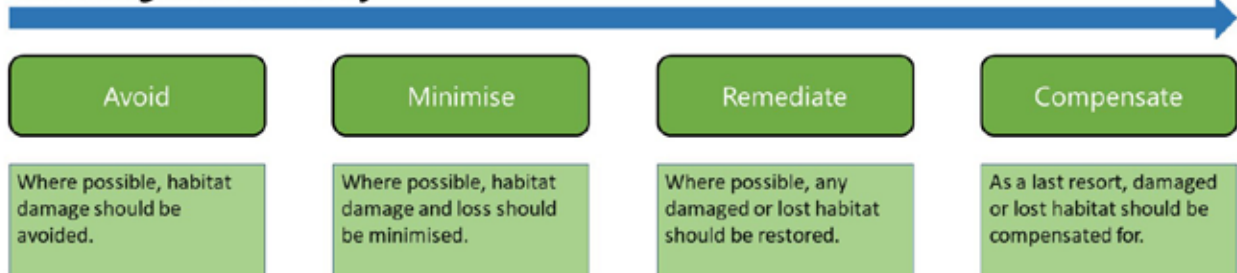
Policy WM 20 - Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy

All residential development within the zones of influence of habitats sites will be required to make a financial contribution towards mitigation measures, as detailed in the Essex Coast RAMS, to avoid adverse in-combination recreational disturbance effects on habitats sites.

- 10.4** Not only is it essential to protect the existing international habitats, but we have a duty to both protect and create, where feasible, other habitats on the Island. This means minimising the loss of trees, hedgerows, ponds, watercourses, meadows etc. In addition, the creation of new features will especially be sought in order to improve the quality of habitats and species on the Island. Proposals should especially demonstrate how they meet the “mitigation hierarchy” illustrated below.



The mitigation hierarchy



Policy WM 21 - Biodiversity

Except in exceptional circumstances, development proposals will demonstrate how they meet the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy of Avoid, Minimise, Remediate and Compensate. Proposals will avoid the loss of, or substantial harm to, important trees, hedgerows and other natural features, including ponds and watercourses.

Where such losses or harm are unavoidable:

- i the benefits of the development proposal must be demonstrated clearly to outweigh any impacts; and
- ii suitable mitigation measures, that may include equivalent or better replacement of the lost features, will be required.

It is expected that the mitigation proposals will form an integral part of the design concept and layout of any development scheme, and that development will be landscape-led and appropriate in relation to its setting, context and ongoing management.

Development proposals will be supported where they provide a net gain in biodiversity through, the following:

- a. Enhancement of the existing features on the site; or
- b. The creation of additional habitats on the site including, where feasible, bat boxes and swift boxes; or
- c. The linking of existing habitats to create links between ecological networks and where possible, with adjoining features.

Community Aspiration 3

The Town Council will ensure open space and coastline receive legal protection and designations are respected in full.

Landscape Character

- 10.5** The landscape of the island, outside the built-up area of West Mersea, is summarised in the Colchester Landscape Appraisal (2005) as:
- Flat, low-lying predominantly arable farmland;
 - Mixture of small, medium and large arable fields with hedged field boundaries (gappy in places);
 - Small fields generally located in close proximity to small farmsteads;
 - Network of drainage ditches traversing the island;
 - Lack of woodland cover, however several mature trees present in hedgerow field boundaries;
 - Views of sea restricted by domed landform of the island.
- 10.6** The Appraisal also noted that there are open views of Langenhoe Coastal Farmland visible on the skyline to the north of the island while views of open sea are restricted by the dome shaped landform of the island.
- 10.7** At the time, the Appraisal noted that the key planning and land management issues were:
- Pressure from expansion of the settlement edges or West Mersea and around East Mersea;
 - Potential for the introduction of visually intrusive agricultural buildings within the coastal farmland landscape, which would be visible from several surrounding character areas;
 - Vulnerable to sea-level rise and the potential effects of global warming;
 - Pressure on minor roads, especially during peak tourist periods;
 - Visually intrusive caravan parks along the edges of Mersea Island;
 - Continuing loss of hedges and field boundary vegetation.

These issues remain some 15 years since the Appraisal was prepared and have been taken account of in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan

- 10.8** A separate Appraisal of Important Views has been prepared in support of the Neighbourhood Plan which notes the key features of the important views from public areas in the Plan Area and which are identified on the Policies Map.

Policy WM 22 - Mitigating Landscape Impact

Proposals will, as appropriate to the development:

- limit the impacts, visual intrusion and adverse impact on the generally undisturbed character of the landscape outside the Settlement Boundary;
- conserve the open nature of the coastal farmland;
- retain important landscape characteristics including trees and ancient hedgerows and other prominent topographical features; and
- ensure that there is no detrimental impact on the key features of important views, including those identified on the Policies Map.

Coastal Protection

- 10.9** The emerging Local Plan acknowledges the importance of the coastal area of the Borough as an extremely rich, diverse and irreplaceable natural asset in terms of its natural and cultural features. As well as the international and European designations referred to above, the Colne and Blackwater Estuaries are also protected as part of the larger Colne, Blackwater, Roach and Crouch Marine Conservation Zone. Policy ENV2 of the emerging Local Plan notes that an integrated approach to coastal management will be promoted and specifies the matters that will be taken into account where development is proposed within the defined Coastal Protection Belt, which covers the whole of Mersea Island including sea and rivers around it.





11

TOURISM

Objectives

- 15 -** To ensure where tourism is encouraged it respects the character of the rural countryside, coastal character and natural habitat.
- 16 -** To support existing and new tourist facilities and leisure developments which benefit the island's economy and employment and are not contrary to the well-being of the island's residents.

11.1 Mersea Island is divided into two parishes – East and West Mersea. From a tourism perspective, each community enhances what the other has to offer and are complementary to each other. Whilst this Neighbourhood Plan is specifically in respect of West Mersea, East Mersea is equally impacted by tourism planning policies. There is an Agreement of Understanding and Cooperation between West Mersea Town Council and East Mersea Parish Council in respect of tourism issues. (See Appendix 4)

11.2 Tourism plays an important role in the economy of the Island and West Mersea in particular. West Mersea's population quoted in the 2011 census was 7,326. Tourism increases this number in varying degrees across this year. Depending on the time of the year mid to long term visitors occupying the 2,787 types of accommodation, as detailed below, can increase this number to over 13,000. Add day visitors and the number can easily rise to 20,000 exceeding the capacity of the island's 1000 public car parking spaces and any other suitable permitted roadside parking.

11.3 There are a number of facilities catering solely for visitors, whether they are day visitors or staying in holiday accommodation. The current provision is illustrated in the table below. The demand is primarily seasonal although some holiday homes are occupied for much of the year. Demand for additional facilities could have an impact on the character of the Island as well as potentially causing harm to the international, European and national wildlife designations. There needs to be a careful balance between meeting the needs of residents, improving the sustainability of the local economy and ensuring that the wildlife designations and historic built environment is not compromised. In particular, there are a number of large mobile home sites around the coast of the Island, adjoining or in

close proximity to the international, European and national wildlife sites. Without careful management of development on the mobile home sites, there could be significant recreational disturbance on the protected designations.

Current levels of tourist accommodation

Type of Accommodation	Quantity
Static Caravans and lodges	1,905
Touring and camping pitches	613
Bed and Breakfast	5
Self-catering cottages	11
Holiday lets/second homes (2011 census)	251
Houseboat lets	2
Total units	2,787

There are some 600 Beach Huts on the Mersea Beach front which, it is believed, are sometimes used illegally for overnight stays.

11.4 In the event that proposals for visitor accommodation outside the West Mersea Settlement Boundary are acceptable, their occupancy will be limited by planning condition or legal agreement to ensure they're used for holiday use only and/or for certain parts of the year in order that they are not used for permanent or long-term residential accommodation.



Policy WM 23 - Tourism and Leisure Development

Development for new and extended visitor attractions and leisure facilities along with visitor accommodation (including hotels, bed and breakfast accommodation, self-catering accommodation, touring caravans and camping sites and ancillary facilities) will be supported in suitable locations provided that proposals do not have a detrimental impact on the local landscape character, natural habitats, the amenity of residents and would not generate unacceptable levels of vehicular traffic on local roads.

Proposals for tourism and leisure development should:

- i be appropriate in scale and function to the surrounding area;
- ii be accessible by a choice of means of transport; and
- iii not be contrary to the well-being of the Island residents and of people living and working nearby.

Proposals that are likely to have an adverse impact on the integrity of International, European or national wildlife sites and historic building environments will not be supported.

In locations where residential use would be inappropriate, developments of visitor accommodation will be limited by condition or legal agreement to holiday use only and/or certain periods of the year in order to prevent permanent or long-term occupation.



Caravan Parks

11.5 There are six caravan/holiday parks on Mersea Island; Firs Chase Caravan Park, Waldegraves Holiday Park, West Mersea Holiday Park (Seaview Caravan Park), Coopers Beach Holiday Park, Away Resorts Mersea Island Holiday Park (Cosways) and Fen Farm Caravan Site, catering for static and touring caravans and holiday lodges/chalets. For the sake of consistency of approach, the Borough Council is encouraged to take a consistent policy approach to the planning of caravan parks across Mersea Island.

11.6 Touring caravan sites, including camping also form part of the visitor economy of the Island and provide spin-offs through use of shops, pubs, restaurants and other facilities in the town. However, sites are generally located outside the Settlement Boundary and therefore have an impact on the countryside within which they sit. The potential for recreational disturbance on the international, European and national wildlife designations is also present and further increases in the number of pitches will not be supported unless matched by a reduction in static caravans or holiday lodges/chalets. However, it should be noted that touring caravans have far less impact on the Island's infrastructure, particularly medical facilities, than do long-term visitors in static caravans and holiday lodges/chalets.

11.7 While planning policies can manage tourism related development, it is important that the visitor economy is managed to ensure that the benefits it brings to the island are not at the cost of the historic and natural environment and residents day-to-day lives. The Town Council can play an important role in this and will take the lead in producing a Tourism Mitigation Strategy in conjunction with the local tourism representatives which will:

- ensure that visitors to the Island feel welcome and enjoy all the attractions it has to offer.
- support sustainable tourism and leisure developments that benefit local businesses because they contribute to the Island's economy and employment.
- support further development of existing tourist facilities and the creation of new facilities and attractions only which conform to the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Policy WM 24 - Caravan Parks

Development proposals, including change of use, (with the exception of change to a standard dwelling C3 (a)), intensification of an existing use, or change in activities on the site, will only be supported at the existing caravan parks, as identified on the Policies Map, where the proposals:

- i. do not adversely impact on the environment, local businesses, or the health and wellbeing of the local community and their enjoyment of current facilities and services. For example: doctors, dentist, vehicular traffic, noise, light pollution.
- ii. have adequate wastewater treatment and sewage infrastructure capacity to serve the caravan park and protect the EU designated coastal bathing water quality and help meet EU Water Framework Directive requirements designed and in operation before implementation/completion of the proposals/development.

Proposals in the Coastal Protection Belt will need to demonstrate how they meet the requirements of Policy ENV2 of the Colchester Local Plan.

Proposals will be limited by planning condition or legal agreement restricting them to holiday use only and/or certain periods of the year in order to prevent permanent or long-term occupation.

The removal of touring caravan/camping sites to be replaced with static caravan sites will not be supported.

Proposals for additional sites should be supported by a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment and Flood Management and Evacuation Plan. Proposals for additional caravans in flood zone 3 will not generally be supported due to the increased risk to people and property from coastal flooding.

- ensure where tourism is encouraged it respects the character of the rural countryside, coastal landscape and natural habitat in accordance with the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- ensure that in all we aspire to achieve through tourism, the wellbeing of the Island's resident communities remain at the forefront of the Neighbourhood Plan Policies.
- support the provision of a Water Bailiff to assist with the management of leisure facilities both on the Waterfront and the Esplanade beaches, on and off the water.

Community Aspiration 4

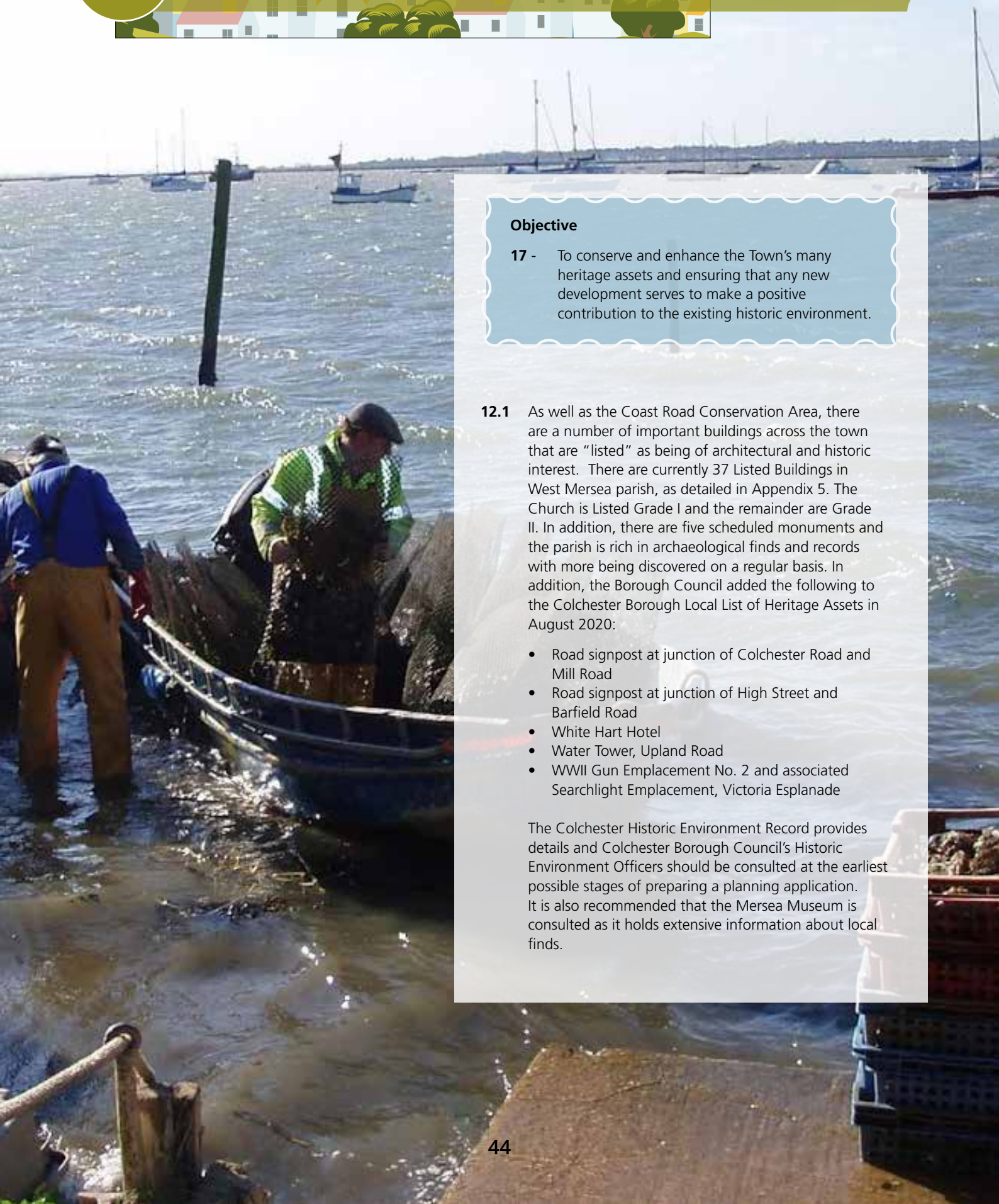
Produce a mitigation strategy, conforming to Local Plan policies, to protect the residents' well-being and amenities, the environment and natural habitat from the adverse effects of growing visitor numbers, staff, suppliers and customers/clients.

Coastal Footpath

- 11.8** A 13½ mile footpath around the island is popular with ramblers while many walk various sections of it from West Mersea. The ongoing replacement due to erosion and enhancement of the path is a high priority in order to provide opportunities for residents and visitors managed opportunities for access to the countryside without detriment to the natural environment.

Policy WM 25 - The Coastal Footpath

Proposals that enable and contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the Coastal Footpath around the Island, as identified on the Policies Map, will be supported.



Objective

- 17 -** To conserve and enhance the Town's many heritage assets and ensuring that any new development serves to make a positive contribution to the existing historic environment.

12.1 As well as the Coast Road Conservation Area, there are a number of important buildings across the town that are "listed" as being of architectural and historic interest. There are currently 37 Listed Buildings in West Mersea parish, as detailed in Appendix 5. The Church is Listed Grade I and the remainder are Grade II. In addition, there are five scheduled monuments and the parish is rich in archaeological finds and records with more being discovered on a regular basis. In addition, the Borough Council added the following to the Colchester Borough Local List of Heritage Assets in August 2020:

- Road signpost at junction of Colchester Road and Mill Road
- Road signpost at junction of High Street and Barfield Road
- White Hart Hotel
- Water Tower, Upland Road
- WWII Gun Emplacement No. 2 and associated Searchlight Emplacement, Victoria Esplanade

The Colchester Historic Environment Record provides details and Colchester Borough Council's Historic Environment Officers should be consulted at the earliest possible stages of preparing a planning application. It is also recommended that the Mersea Museum is consulted as it holds extensive information about local finds.



Policy WM 26 - Heritage Assets

To ensure the conservation and enhancement of West Mersea's heritage assets, including scheduled monuments listed buildings, listed buildings, non-designated assets, below ground archaeological features and the Coast Road Conservation Area, proposals must:

- i. preserve or enhance the significance of the heritage assets, their setting and the wider built environment, including the character and appearance of the Coast Road conservation area identified on the Policies Map;
- ii. retain buildings or spaces, the loss of which would cause harm to the character or appearance of the conservation area;
- iii. be of an appropriate scale, form, height, massing, alignment and detailed design which respects the area's character, appearance and setting and;
- iv. demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the asset and wider context in which the heritage asset sits, alongside an assessment of the potential impact of the development on the heritage asset and its context;

Where a planning proposal affects a heritage asset, it must be accompanied by a heritage statement identifying, as a minimum, the significance of the asset, and an assessment of the impact of the proposal on heritage assets.

The level of detail of the heritage statement should be proportionate to the importance of the asset, the works proposed and sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on its significance and/or wider setting and/or wider substantial benefit. It should demonstrate that the Historic Environment Record has been consulted.

Where appropriate development proposals should demonstrate that they have taken into account the potential impact on above and below ground archaeological deposits and identify mitigation strategies to ensure that evidence which could contribute to the understanding of human activity and past environments is not lost.

Proposals that would contribute appropriately to the restoration, reuse or enhancement of a heritage asset or the West Mersea Conservation Area will be supported in principle.

- 12.2** There are a number of buildings and features in the parish that are of local significance and which, while not yet formally designated as 'Local Heritage Assets', make a significant contribution to the historic environment and character of West Mersea and may be worthy of being protected as Local Heritage Assets. Work undertaken during the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan has identified 36 potential heritage assets that are of local significance and that should be considered for inclusion in the "Local List", which the Town Council will pursue with the Borough Council.

Community Aspiration 5

West Mersea Town Council will monitor and safeguard qualifying Heritage Assets that the West Mersea community considers of significant importance for inclusion on the Colchester Local List.

Policy WM 27 - Local Heritage Assets

The retention and protection of local heritage assets, as designated by Colchester Borough Council, must be appropriately secured.

Proposals for any works that would lead to the loss of, or substantial harm to, a local heritage asset will be resisted unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated. Proposals should be supported by an appropriate analysis of the significance of the asset to enable a balanced judgement to be made having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the heritage significance of the asset.

Proposals for any works that would affect local heritage assets should be designed sensitively, with careful regard to the historical and architectural interest and setting, including important views towards and from the asset.

All development will be required to be designed appropriately, taking account of local styles, materials and detail.

13

DEVELOPMENT DESIGN

Objectives

- 18 - To preserve the Town Centre character, the Strood Causeway and Packing Marsh Island.
- 19 - To minimise the impact of new development on the environment

Light Pollution

- 13.1** Artificial lighting, including street lights, floodlighting of buildings, while increasing security, can also impact upon residential amenity, the character and appearance of an area and the environment. West Mersea generates relatively little light pollution when compared with larger settlements nearby and it is important that we keep it that way. Aspects such as poor design, location or the expulsion of unnecessarily high levels of light can also have a harmful impact. Paragraph 180 (c) of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should *“limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation”*.

Policy WM 28 - Minimising Light Pollution

Outdoor lighting systems should have a minimum impact on the environment, minimising light pollution and adverse effects on wildlife subject to highway safety, the needs of particular individuals or groups, and security. Schemes should reduce the consumption of energy by promoting efficient outdoor lighting technologies and reducing glare.

Design Considerations

- 13.2** The detail of new development can, without careful consideration, have a significant impact on the character of an area and existing residents living there. As noted in the emerging Local Plan, development must positively contribute to the public realm, preserving or enhancing the sense of place, including historic

interest, landscape, townscape, streetscape, character areas, route hierarchy, roofscapes, key views, gateways, nodes, edges, landmarks, green links and spaces.

- 13.3** It is also essential that the sustainability of development, its location and the materials used is given the highest consideration at the design stage. Sustainable development aims to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, now and in the future. The principles of sustainable development should form the basis for individual decisions which people take regularly about where to live, and work, shop, where to travel, how to dispose of waste, and how to use energy and other natural resources efficiently.

- 13.4** There are certain broad requirements which all development should meet if it is to be acceptable in terms of the impact on:

- the landscape, natural environment and cultural heritage;
- quality of design;
- sustainable use of resources;
- amenity;
- highway safety; and
- infrastructure.

- 13.5** Colchester Borough Council has declared a Climate Emergency and has committed to being carbon neutral by 2030. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as defined in the Framework. Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. These are economic, social and environmental objectives. Being an island only connected to the mainland by The Strood, Mersea Island is especially susceptible to the consequences of climate change as witnessed by more frequent flooding of The Strood and Coast Road and the consequent knock-on transport issues and delays and coastal erosion. In worse case scenarios, traffic queues at the time of flooding has been known to stretch as far as Abberton Hill, some 2½ miles away, and take between 2 and 3 hours to clear.

- 13.6** When planning applications are submitted to the Borough Council they should, as a matter of course, demonstrate how they meet the considerations of Policy WM 30.

Policy WM 29 - Design Considerations

Proposals for new development must reflect the local characteristics and circumstances in the Neighbourhood Plan area and create and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment.

Planning applications will be supported where, as appropriate to the proposal, they:

- a. recognise and address the key features, characteristics, landscape/building character, local distinctiveness and special qualities of the area (including The Coast) and/or building as identified in the Built Character Assessment and, where necessary, prepare a landscape character appraisal to demonstrate this;
- b. maintain or create a sense of place and/or local character avoiding, where possible, cul-de-sac developments;
- c. do not involve the loss of important open spaces identified on the Policies Map, which make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the locality;
- d. take mitigation measures into account, do not affect adversely the amenities of adjacent areas by reason of overlooking, overshadowing, loss of light, other pollution (including light pollution), or volume or type of vehicular activity generated; and/or residential amenity;
- e. not locate sensitive development where its users and nearby residents would be significantly and adversely affected by noise, smell, vibration, or other forms of pollution from existing sources, unless adequate and appropriate mitigation can be implemented;
- f. produce designs that respect the character, scale and density of the locality;
- g. are designed to remove the threat or perceived threat of crime and improve community safety;
- h. produce designs, in accordance with standards, that maintain or enhance the safety of the highway network ensuring that all vehicle parking is provided within the plot and seek always to ensure permeability through new housing areas, connecting any new development into the heart of the existing settlement;
- i. wherever possible ensure that development faces on to existing roads, retaining the rural character and creates cross streets or new back streets in keeping with the settlement's hierarchy of routes;
- j. through the incorporation of Sustainable Drainage Systems, do not result in water run-off that would add-to or create surface water flooding;
- k. where appropriate, make adequate provision for the covered storage of all wheelie bins and for cycle storage in accordance with adopted cycle parking standards.
- l. include suitable ducting capable of accepting fibre to enable superfast broadband; and
- m. provide access to electric vehicle charging points equal to one charging point for every off-street parking space provided.

- 13.7** Many energy-saving initiatives can be installed on homes within permitted development rights (ie – planning permission is not required) but there may be occasions where schemes that do require planning

permission could have a potential adverse impact on the character of the area and the amenity of nearby residents.

Policy WM 30 - Sustainable Construction Practices

Proposals that incorporate current best practice in energy conservation will be supported where such measures are designed to be integral to the building design and minimise any detrimental impact on the building or its surroundings. Development proposals should demonstrate how they:

- a. maximise the benefits of solar gain in site layouts and orientation of buildings;
- b. incorporate best practice in energy conservation and be designed to achieve maximum achievable energy efficiency;
- c. avoid fossil fuel-based heating systems; and
- d. incorporate sustainable design and construction measures and energy efficiency measures including, where feasible, ground/air source heat pumps, solar panels and grey/rainwater harvesting and recycling.

Flooding

- 13.8** Being an island Mersea is especially susceptible to rising sea levels and high tides already flood The Strood and cause flooding along Coast Road and at its junction with The Lane, where a purpose-built portable Flood Barrier can be installed when necessary. The NPPF and supporting Planning Practice Guidance require individual Flood Risk Assessments to be prepared in certain circumstances to assess flood risk at the site-specific level. Site specific Flood Risk Assessments must therefore be submitted with planning applications for development proposals on sites of 1 hectare (ha) or more in Flood Zone 1 or for all development proposals in Flood Zone 2 or 3.
- 13.9** Over the course of time, ditches and ponds are likely to have been lost to property infill, hard landscaping and ditch infill. Surface water drainage is a problem in many parts of the town as illustrated on the extract from the Government's Long-Term Flood Risk information map. New development will be required, where appropriate, to make provision for the attenuation and recycling of surface water and rainwater in order to reduce the potential for making the situation worse.



14

MONITORING AND DELIVERY

- 14.1** The Town Council will review, in the form of a report to the Annual Council Meeting, the policies laid out in this Plan in order to check whether they are being applied as intended and whether overall the Plan is as effective as intended.
- 14.2** The eventual completion and adoption of the currently emerging Local Plan will require a review of the Neighbourhood Plan to make sure it is still compliant with any new Strategic Policies, although the Plan has been prepared to have regard to the Plan that is currently being examined.

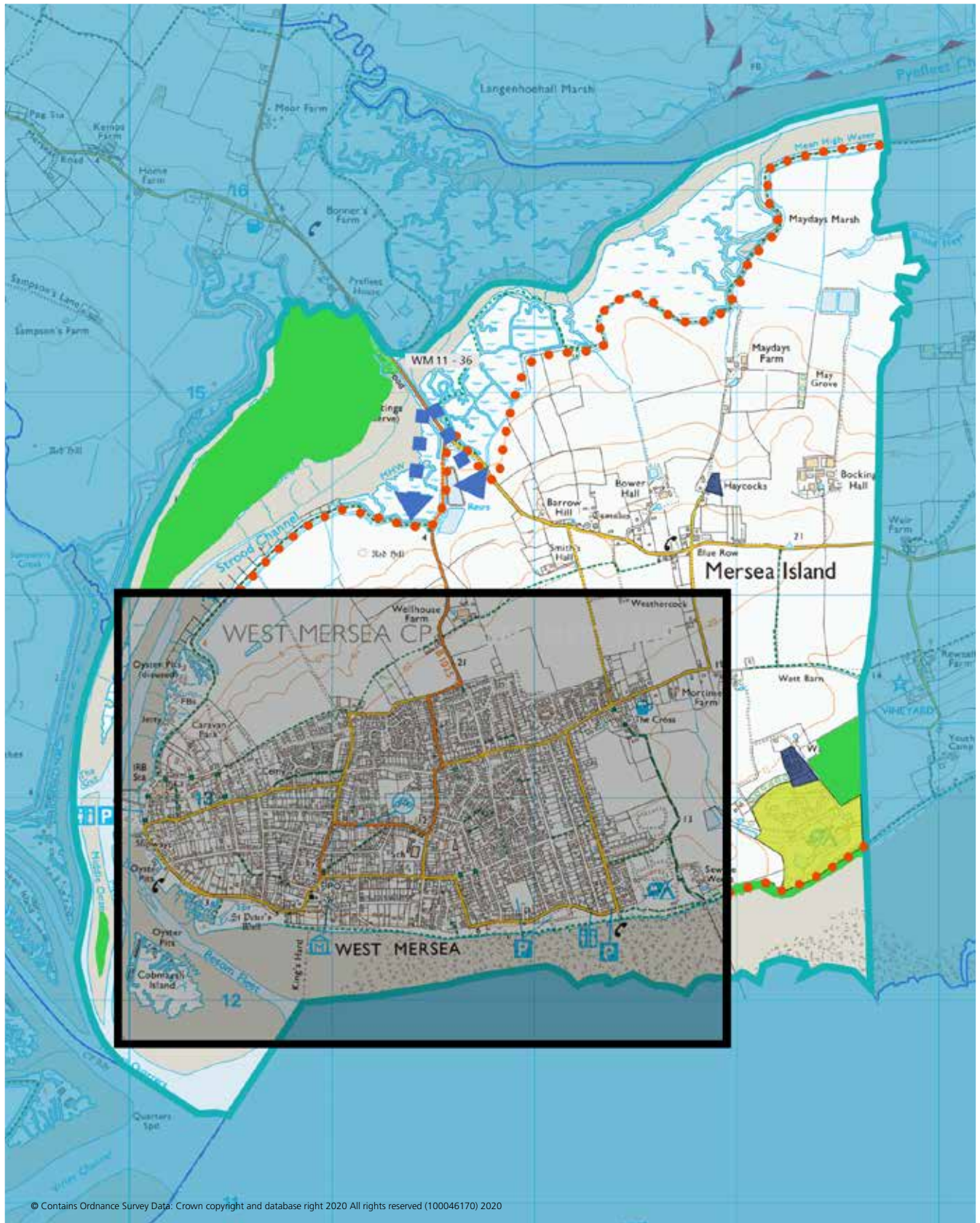


POLICIES MAP AND INSET MAPS KEY

	Settlement Boundary (WM 1, WM 2, WM 5)
	Dawes Lane Housing Allocation (WM 2, WM 3)
	Employment Sites (WM 14)
	Coast Road Marine Services Area (WM 15)
	Town Centre Sites (WM 16)
	Proposed Open Space (WM 3)
	Important Open Space (WM 10)
	Coastal Footpath (WM 25)
	Important Views (WM 3, WM 29)
	Conservation Area
	Land reserved for new Health Facilities (WM 17)
	Touring Caravan Facilities (WM 24)
	Plan Area Boundary

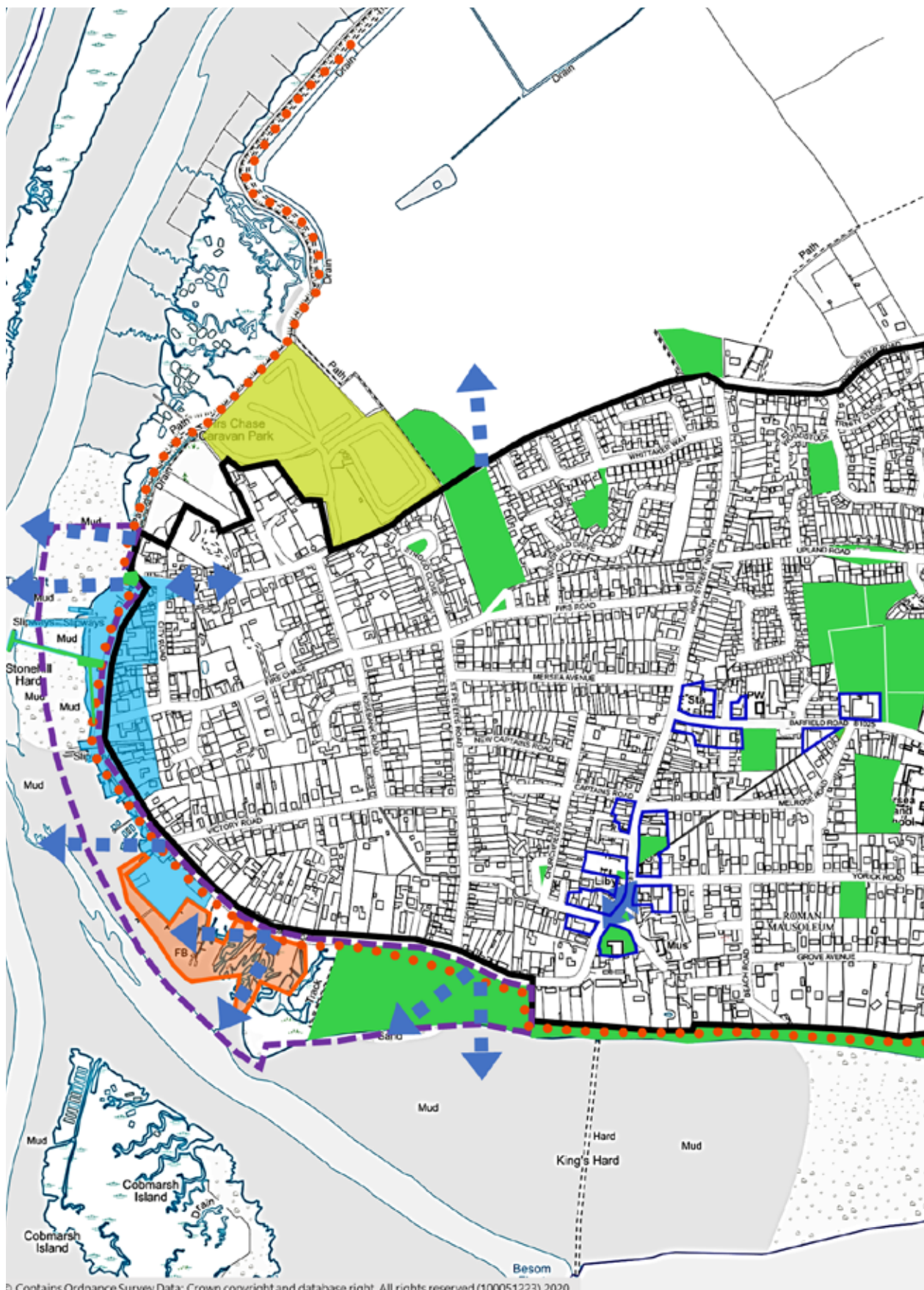


POLICIES MAP





INSET MAP WEST



© Contains Ordnance Survey Data: Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (100051223) 2020





GLOSSARY

Affordable housing: The NPPF defines Affordable Housing as “housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:” Definitions are set out for a) affordable housing for rent; b) starter homes; c) discounted market sales housing; and d) other affordable routes to home ownership.

Archaeological interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.

Biodiversity: Describes the range and variety of living organisms within an ecosystem. It can include all living organisms, plants, animals, fungi and bacteria and is often used to indicate the richness or number of species in an area. Such an area can be defined at different levels across the globe or be limited to a local area such as a parish.

Buildings of local significance: Locally important building valued for its contribution to the local scene or for local historical situations but not meriting listed status.

Conservation (for heritage policy): The process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.

Community Infrastructure Levy: A levy allowing local authorities to raise funds from owners or developers of land undertaking new building projects in their area.

Development Plan: This includes adopted Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans as defined in section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Green infrastructure: A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.

Habitat: The natural home of an animal or plant often designated as an area of nature conservation interest.

Heritage asset: A term that includes designated heritage assets (e.g. listed buildings, world heritage sites, conservation areas, scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered parks and gardens and battlefields) and non-designated assets identified by the local planning authority. Non-designated heritage assets include sites of archaeological interest, buildings, structures or features of local heritage interest listed by, or fulfilling criteria for listing by, the local planning authority.

Historic environment: All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and landscaped and planted or managed flora.

Infrastructure: The basic physical and organisational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads and power supplies) necessary for development to take place.

Local planning authority: The public authority whose duty it is to carry out specific planning functions for a particular area which, in this case, is Colchester Borough Council.

Local Plan: The plan for the future development of the local area, drawn up by the local planning authority in consultation with the community.

Marine Conservation Zone: These are areas that protect a range of nationally important, rare or threatened habitats and species.

Neighbourhood Plans: A plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

Open space: All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.

RAMSAR sites: An area identified by international agreement on endangered habitats

Renewable and low carbon energy: Includes energy for heating and cooling as well as generating electricity. Renewable energy covers those energy flows that occur naturally and repeatedly in the environment – from the wind, the fall of water, the movement of the oceans, from the sun and also from biomass and deep geothermal heat. Low carbon technologies are those that can help reduce emissions (compared to conventional use of fossil fuels).

Rural exception sites for affordable housing: Sites for affordable housing development in rural locations where market housing would not normally be acceptable because of planning policy constraints. Homes can be brought forward on these sites only if there is a proven unmet local need for affordable housing and a legal planning agreement is in place to ensure that the homes will always remain affordable, will be for people in housing need and prioritised for those with a strong local connection to the parish.

Setting of a heritage asset: The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.

Settlement Boundary: This is defined in the Colchester Local Plan and is a planning term that does not necessarily include all buildings within the boundary.

Significance (for heritage policy): The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): Land notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as an ecosystem of flora and/or fauna considered by Natural England to be of significant national value and interest to merit its conservation and management.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC): A site of European Community importance designated by the member states, where necessary conservation measures are applied for the maintenance or restoration, at favourable conservation status, of the habitats and/or species for which the site is designated.

Special Protection Areas (SPA): A site designated under the Birds Directive by the member states where appropriate steps are taken to protect the bird species for which the site is designated.

Strategic Environmental Assessment: A procedure (set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Use Classes: The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) puts uses of land and buildings into various categories known as 'Use Classes'.

Wildlife corridor: A link comprising of wildlife habitat, generally native vegetation, which joins two or more larger areas of similar wildlife habitat. Corridors are critical for the maintenance of ecological processes including allowing for the movement of animals and the continuation of viable populations of plants and animals.





Appendix 1 – Overall Summary of Open Space, Sport and Recreation areas for Mersea

No	SITE NAME	CODE TYPE	AREA Ha	PUBLIC PRIVATE	COMMENTS & NOTES
1	Glebe 1 Recreation Ground Tennis Court Youth Play area Wood north east	OSF OSF PY AGS	3.345 (0.329) 0.029 0.096	PUBLIC TOTAL AREA 3.47 Ha	Two senior football pitches and junior pitch. Cricket square and training nets. Three hard surface tennis courts and three grass courts. Basket ball court. Two Pavilions with car park for about 64 cars.
2	Glebe 2 playing field extension. Children's playground. BMX Area. Open space	OSF PC PY AGS	4.1 0.05 0.03 2.12	PUBLIC Total Area of this OPEN SPACE= 6.3 in original application documents	Two Rugger pitches. One senior and two junior football pitches, training area with flood lights. BMX track. Young Children's Playground. open space with meadow grass and tracks through. No Car parking, pedestrian access only from Glebe 1 or Wellhouse Estate. Also potential access from/to Glebe 3
2a	Glebe 3	OSF		5.2 allocated only	Allocated land for recreation proposed in CBC Local Plan Document (development 5.0Ha)
3	Open space middle of Wellhouse Green	AGS	0.045	CBC	
4	Open space mid Seaview Avenue	AGS	0.076	CBC	
5	Open space bottom Fairhaven Avenue	AGS	0.060	CBC	
6	Old Putting Green	AGS	0.422	CBC	Victoria Esplanade
7	Victoria Esplanade Car Park	AGS	0.838	CBC	
8	Beach Hut area	AGS	1.874	CBC & Private	
9	Children's Playground	PC	0.051	CBC	Victoria Esplanade
10	Gainsborough Open Space	AGS	0.256	CBC	
11	Oakwood Ave Open Space	AGS	0.231	CBC	East Side behind housing on East road
12	Oakwood Ave Open Space Oakwood Ave Open Space	AGS AGS	0.143 0.133	CBC CBC	North end on east side of road South end on east side of road to East Road
13	Colchester Road Bowls Club	OSF INSF	0.582 (0.089)	Private Private	
14	Chatsworth Rd Open Space	AGS	0.411	CBC	
15	Whittaker Way Open Space	AGS	0.293	CBC	
16	Strood Close Open Space	AGS	0.079	CBC	
17	Green area Upland Road	AGS	0.098	CBC	
18	Reymead Wood	NSN	0.60	CBC & WMTC	Joint ownership with CBC
19	Mersea Park Reymead Open Space	PG	0.611	CBC & WMTC	Joint ownership with CBC

No	SITE NAME	CODE TYPE	AREA Ha	PUBLIC PRIVATE	COMMENTS & NOTES
20	School/Legion Field Wooded Area	AGS/ OSF NSN	0.968 0.129	Private Public WMTC	The field is open to community use. WM Hockey Club use this field 1 to 10 games Wooded area in west set aside for school use.
21	Youth Field/Village Green Skate Park Youth Playground	AGS PY PY	1.050 (0.032) (0.050)	WMTC	Registered VG 246
22	School Gardens Children's Playground Shelter with seats	PG PC PY	0.327 (0.034) (0.003)	WMTC	
23	Open Space Sensory Garden Melrose Road Open Space opposite	AGS AGS	.022 0.003	WMTC WMTC	Grassed area with seat around tree and seating around flowers borders. Also small Green opposite with tree and seat.
24	Mersea School Playing Fields	OSF	0.742	Private	Sole use of school for recreational activities.
25	Yorick Road Bowls Club	OSF	0.254	Private	Greensward for bowls
26	Village Green Dabchicks	CS	0.06	Private	Reg. part of VG 241 part concrete/ part beach.
27	Promenade Floating Causeway	CS CS	0.07 0.12	CBC CBC	Reg. Part of VG 241 Concrete area in front of Car Park. Total VG area 0.80 Ha
28	Churchfields Open Space	AGS	0.050	CBC	Green area with commemorative tree and car park area at north end.
29	St. Peter's Well Village Green Top Section Marsh Beach	AGS NSN B	627 Registered as 3.75 Ha for whole area 2.56 0.580	WMTC WMTC WMTC	This whole area is a registered VG 185 and SSSI area. Grassed area with seats and pathways. Part of the VG between top section and Beach Part of VG from marsh to High Water
30	Village Green in front of Parish Church	AGS		WMTC	Registered VG116 is used by the Town as a community area which also has the War Memorial maintained by the RBL
31	Beach Monkey steps to Broomhills	B		Private	
32	Beach Broomhills to Seaview Avenue	B		CBC	
33	Beach Seaview to Waldergraves	B		Private	
34	Beach Waldegraves	B		Private	
35	Broomhills Greensward	AGS		WMTC	
36	Willoughby Open Space Car Park	AGS AGS		WMTC	
37	Parish Churchyard	CEM		Church	
38	Barfield Road Burial Ground	CEM		WMTC	
39	Firs Road Burial Ground 1	CEM		WMTC	
40	Firs Road Burial Ground 2	CEM		WMTC	

No	SITE NAME	CODE TYPE	AREA Ha	PUBLIC PRIVATE	COMMENTS & NOTES
41	Feldy View Woodland Burial Ground	CEM	0.933	WMTC	Natural woodland burial ground
42	Coastal Footpath	B	-----		This goes right around the Island s25 CROW
43	Waldegraves Golf & Fishing	OSF	7.61 1.025	Private but available for residents and visitors to hire	Golf Driving Range - 18 hole Pitch & Putt Golf- 9 hole Footgolf - Crazy Golf 4 off Fishing Ponds
44	Brierley Paddocks	AGS		3.1Ha 9.2 Ha site total	Allocated land for recreation now approved by Planning authority
45	Fishing Reservoir 2 off Colchester Road	OSF	0.980 1.06	Private	Farm reservoir AM Gray & Co
46	Mersea Outdoors	OSF PY	(13.4)	ECC	note this area is out side WM Parish, but close enough to be available for WM residence
47	Seaview Avenue Car Park	AGS	0.268	WMTC	Top end grass suitable picnic area in quite times
48	Beach Areas in front of Mersea Outdoors Cooper's Caravan site Fen Farm Caravan site Mersea Island Holiday Park	B	(3.66)	Private	Approximate areas added up give total note this area is in East Mersea Parish
49	Beach Cudmore Grove Country Park	B	(5.10)	ECC	Approximate areas added up give total note this area is in East Mersea Parish
50	Cudmore Grove Country Park	PG	(29.0)	ECC	note this area is in East Mersea Parish
51	MICA Main Hall, Squash, Gym etc	INSF	0.054	Public	
52	Allotments	A	1.94	WMTC	
53	Packing Marsh Island	NSN	1.82	T & M N O F Co..	Leased by The Packing Shed Trust
54	Ray Island Nature Reserve	NSN	65.0 40.47	Essex Wildlife Trust	Access by members only during 1st March to 31st August.
55	Water Ski Club	AGS	0.212	CBC	Water Ski Club leases land from CBC
56	Greensward Glebe corner	AGS	0.063	WMTC	Visual amenity grass area with some flower planting
57	Civic Space in front of Library	CS	0.015	ECC	Paved area
58	Firs Road Cemetery Green and roads	AGS	0.105	CBC	Grass area at entrance to Firs Road Cemetery

1 Hectare = 2.47105 Acres = 10,000 sq. metres

1 Acre = 0.4047 Ha

CBC has in it's IDP Oct 2017 Report in various tables show requirements for West Mersea with the extra 200 Dwellings and 448 persons:

Parks and Gardens:	0.79ha	
NSN:	2.24ha	
AGS:	0.49ha	
Allotments:	0.09ha	£8,960
Playspace:	0.11	£0
Youth Needs:	0.13	£0
Grass Sports Pitches	0.54	£80,000 (equivalent of one adult football pitch)
MUGAs	0	
LEAPS:	0	
NEAPS:	0	
Community Centre Needs	150sq. m	
Community Centre Needs facilities	0	

SUMMARY TOTALS OF AREAS BY TYPE

AREA CODE	TYPE	AREA in Ha	NOTES
ISF SEC 5	Indoor Sport and Recreation	0.143	Indoor Bowls and MICA
PG SEC 6	Parks and Gardens	0.938 (29.0)	Mersea Park Cudmore Grove in East Mersea Parish
AGS SEC 7	Amenity Green Spaces	10.095	
NSN SEC 8	Natural and Semi-Natural Areas	44.45	
OSF SEC 9	Outdoor Sports Facilities	8.413 0.836 7.610 3.065 (13.40) (0.742)	Glebe 1 & 2 and Legion Field Bowls Golf Fishing ponds Mersea Outdoors in East Mersea Parish School Playing Field Private
A SEC 10	Allotments	1.94	Rented field by WMTC
C SEC 11	Cemeteries & Churchyards	3.224	
PC SEC 12	Provision for Children	0.135	
PC SEC 13	Provision for Young People	0.144	This does not include Mersea Outdoors of some 13.4 ha above
GC SEC 14	Green Corridors		
B SEC 14	Beaches and Coastal Areas	5.24 (8.76)	Beach area in Parish Beach area outside Parish in East Mersea
CS SEC 15	Civic Spaces	0.265	
	TOTAL OF ALL AREAS	86.548	
	Above + Golf + Fishing	97.223	
	Above + Mersea Outdoors	110.623	
	Above + Cudmore Grove Park	139.623	
	Above + School Playing Field	140.365	
	Above + Beaches in East Mersea Parish	149.125	

NOTE:

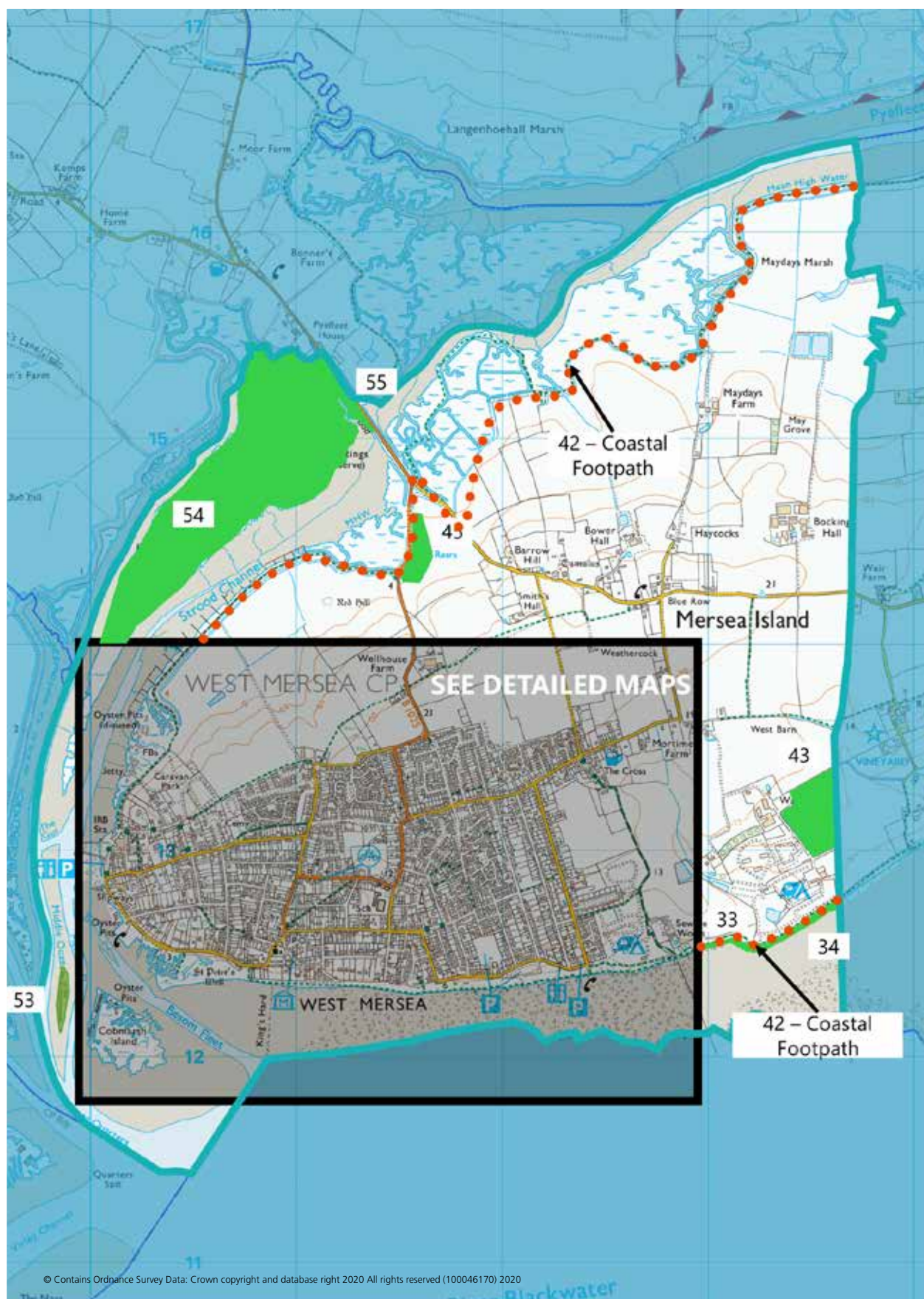
1. In the TOTAL OF ALL AREAS above the provision for open spaces in the developments at Dawes Lane and Brierley Paddocks have NOT been included but appear in the list only.
2. In the Totals above the areas outside the Parish i.e. in East Mersea but still on the Island have not been included in the totals but are listed separately.

STANDARDS SET: NATIONAL - CBC REQUIREMENTS - WEST MERSEA REQUIREMENTS & ACTUALS

TYPE OF PROVISION	National Standards Hectares per 1000 POPULATION	Colchester Borough Council REQUIREMENTS per 1000 population	ACTUAL REQUIREMENT for WEST MERSEA @ 7326 (Island 7572)	ACTUAL AREAS FOR WEST MERSEA	WEST MERSEA STANDARDS per 1000 population
Open Space wildlife and countryside areas, woodland/shelter belts, lakes and ponds, new tree/ woodland planting	1.63				
Parks & Gardens	0.8	1.76			
Amenity Green Spaces	0.6	1.1	8.06 New developments add approx a further 8.0	11.042 @ 8140 population	1.51 2.34
All Natural & Semi-Nat Open Space Areas	1.8		36.63 72.01	44.45 +5.24 Beaches = 49.69	.07 6.78
For Children's Play Area	Per 1000 population (target 1 play area per 300 population aged 0-9 years assuming 13% population in this age range = 0.5) factoring in catchment and physical barriers limitations	5.0 (Urban) 9.83 (Urban / Rural)		3 Play areas 0.135	 0.0184
Provision for Children		0.05	0.366	0.135	0.184
Provision for Youth		0.05	0.366	0.366	0.144
LEAP Local Equipped Areas of Play	1.0		7.24		
NEAP Neighbourhood Equipped Areas of Play	0.28		2.03		
11 + FACILITY	0.28		2.03	0.144	0.02
Outdoor Sports changing/ ancillary	1.20	 1.5	8.69 10.86	9.346	1.23 1.48
Outdoor Sports Facilities inc. Golf also inc. Fishing	FIT all Outdoor Sports 1.6	2.1 1.5	15.38 11.72 10.99	9.249 16.859 19.924	2.27 4.96 2.69
Indoor sports facilities (four court hall)	1 per 13,800 population or 0.072 per 1000 population		0.53	0.143	0.02
Swimming (4 lane pool)	1 per 20,650 population or 0.0484 per 1000 population		.355	0	
Allotments	0.2 ha per 1000 population FIT Media 0.3	0.2	1.47 2.20	1.94	0.26
Public Art	1.0 per 1000 pop.		7.33	2 in number	0.27



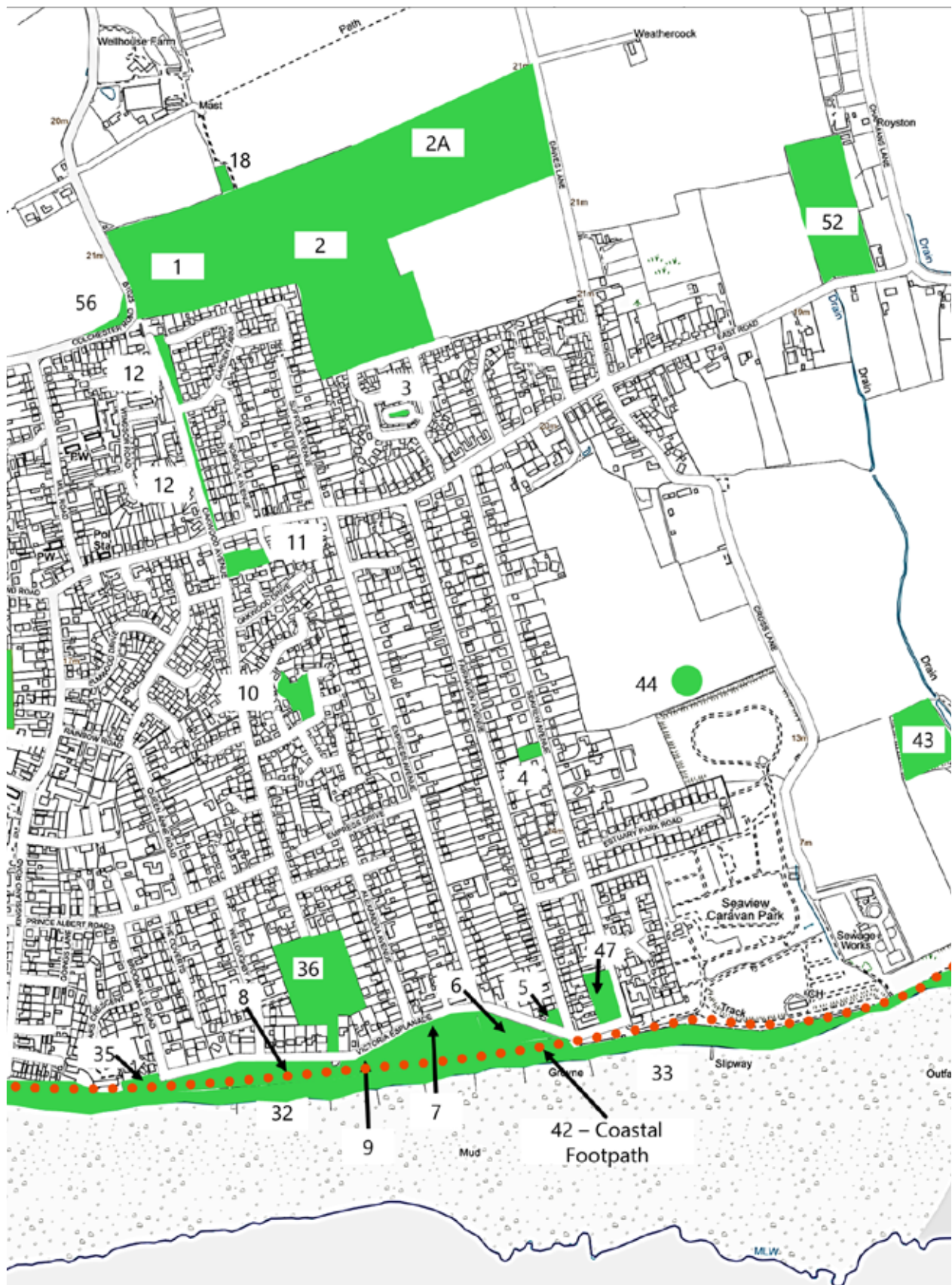
OPEN SPACE – MAP 1







OPEN SPACE – MAP 3



© Contains Ordnance Survey Data: Crown copyright and database right 2020 All rights reserved (100046170) 2020



Appendix 2 – West Mersea Town Council proposals for highway improvements

The list below is based on a traffic survey carried out by the Council in January 2014, details of which are held at the Council Offices.

1. Victoria Esplanade

The blind bend between the Two Sugars Cafe, the Willoughby Car Park and public toilets, is a hazard for pedestrians, particularly for children coming up from the beach unaccompanied to visit the toilets. This danger is compounded by roadside parking in the winter months when the official car parks are closed. There should be parking restrictions in this area throughout the year and traffic calming introduced either side of the blind bend.

2. Barfield Road/High Street/High Street North Junction

Traffic going north from the High Street and straight on into High Street North are able to do so at speed causing a hazard at the exit to Tesco's car park and the junction of Mersea Avenue. Traffic calming measures, such as an extension of the pavement on the west side of the junction, would mitigate the risks.

3. Kingsland Road/Barfield Road Junction

This junction is in the vicinity of both school entrances with buses using the access in both directions. Vehicles often take these corners at speed and traffic calming measures would assist.

4. Elmwood Drive on to Kingsland Road.

Cars often park nose to tail at the entrance to Elmwood Drive when using facilities in Kingsland Road. This creates a blind one way corner where cars even reverse back out on to the main Kingsland Road. Double yellow lines or residents only parking would alleviate this hazard. (Petition from residents, August 2011)

5. Yorick Road and the High Street junction

On the bus route with a difficult turn for buses into Yorick Road from the High Street. Car parking is the biggest problem along this whole stretch of road and double yellow lines with passing bays would assist with traffic flow.

6. Firs Chase

Over the years this has become the main feed to the Waterfront rather than Coast Road and it is a tree-lined lane without pavements. Cars often take this road at speed and traffic calming is thought to be essential. 20 mph from the point where the pavement ends and the road narrows at the top of the hill down to Coast Road Junction would assist.

7. Coast Road

When the Coast Road car park is full, most of the visiting traffic carries to the end of the cul de sac and then has to turn around by reversing into The Lane, which has a 'No Entry' sign, in order to return. Some park, even though there are yellow lines, and many disable badge holders park on both sides

anyway. This causes great congestion and danger to youngster manoeuvring sailing dinghies, or restrictions for crew trying to get to the Lifeboat Station. This should be a 'No Entry apart from Access' zone. (Petition from residents undated).

There has also been considerable pressure to introduce traffic Calming measures along the length of Coast Road. There have been a number of accidents caused either by speed or drivers taking in the view.

8. Strood Access road B1025 on and off Mersea Island.

This is the only road access to Mersea Island and West Mersea. The predicted high tides do come to the road edge 369 out of the 706 high tides for year 2021, equivalent 52%. The sea level rises predicted to 2060 will increase this to between 71 to 79%.^{1 & 2} that the tide comes to the road. Whilst these are predicted heights the weather and atmospheric pressure do effect the predicted tidal heights.

The effect of the tides blocking the road causes traffic hold ups for anything from a few minutes to several hours often resulting in the mainland traffic queues extending several kilometres back to Pete Tye common and beyond. The increasing number of dwellings and increased tourism is creating more vehicles needing to access the Island. During the period 2009 to 2019 the traffic on the B1025 has increased by 15.7%.³

9. Parking Prohibition lines.

There have been a number of additional Yellow and Red Lines put down under the Covid 19 regulation order. These do need to be reviewed by West Mersea Town Council at some point in the future. This would then have allowed for time to see how these restrictions have worked or not.

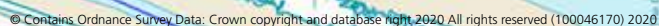
¹Southern North Sea storm surge event of 5th December 2013: Water levels, waves and coastal impacts.

Published 15th April 2015.

<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/42133386.pdf>

² <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2020/04/21/how-much-more-climate-change-is-inevitable-for-the-uk>

³ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/2020/04/21/how-much-more-climate-change-is-inevitable-for-the-uk>





Appendix 3 – Agreement of Understanding and Cooperation between the West Mersea

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (WMNPSG) and East Mersea Parish Council (EMPC)

1. The aim of this agreement is to establish a good working relationship between the WMNPSG and EMPC. This is essential for the purpose of constructing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for West Mersea that will also give due consideration to the community of East Mersea.
2. The WMNPSG and EMPC will work closely together on areas where they share a common interest. Examples of this are the caravan parks, tourism, the environment including but not limited to the preservation and benefit of our wildlife, birds, and seawater quality, recreational areas and open spaces. There may be other areas identified as the process develops.
3. A representative of EMPC will have a seat on the WMNPSG and will liaise between both community groups. The representative will be included on the distribution for the NPSG agenda, and minutes and will also have access to view information on the NP Google drive. The EMPC representative will share information and data which is available to them in support of the NP.
4. Following the adoption of the NP both East and West Mersea Councils may consider it beneficial to have procedures in place to ensure the policies contained within the NP are monitored and complied with.
5. This agreement will provide evidence for inclusion in the NP Consultative Statement of how the WMNPSG engaged and consulted with East Mersea Parish Council to shape the development of the NP.

Cllr Jeff Mason
Chairman EMPC

Cllr Peter Banks
Chairman WMNPSG



Appendix 4 – Nationally Designated Heritage Assets

Listed Buildings:

Yew Tree House , 12 Coast Road
1 & 2 The Square, Coast Road
Rosebank , 58 Coast Road
Stone House, 112 Coast Road
The White Cottage, 136 Coast Road
The Old Victory, 140,(141),142 Coast Road
Smugglers Way, 144 Coast Road
Wellhouse, Colchester Road
Redwing, 6 Colchester Road
Bocking Hall, East Mersea Road
Garden Farm 2 East Road (listed as Farmhouse Garden)
Forge Cottage, 10 East Mersea Road
Brierley Hall,72 East Road
Brierley Hall Garden Wall, 72 East Road
Garden Cottage,114 & 116 East Road
Cherrytree Cottage, 50 East Road (listed as Pear Tree Cottage).
The Firs, 19 Firs Chase
West Mersea Hall, 4 High Street
Brick House, 67 High Street North
Picaroon Cottage & Mariners Way, 1 & 3 The Lane
Bluebird Cottage, 5 The Lane
Anchor Cottage, 9 The Lane
Curlew Cottage, 17 The Lane
Periwinkle , 2 The Lane
Nutshell, 4 The Lane
Little Timbers,6 The Lane
Creek Cottage, St Botolph's, 37 The Lane formerly 3 The Lane
Honeysuckle Cottage, 45, 47 & 49 The Lane
51 The Lane
Casa Pantis, 20 Yorick Road
Barn at Brierley Hall Farm, 72 East Road. (listed but blown down in 2001)
Barn at Brierley Hall Farm (possibly the brick building attached to the house)
56 Coast Road, (Formerly listed as 10 Coast Road)
30 Firs Chase
32 Firs Chase



West Mersea

Stay informed and get involved:



merseamatters.uk



theplan@merseamatters.uk



Follow updates in the Courier



West Mersea Neighbourhood Plan



APRIL 2021

Planning for Mersea's future