



**Pam Cox MP**  
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Matthew Pennycook MP  
Minister of State for Housing and Planning  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

20 June 2025

Dear Matthew,

**ABRO Development Site, Colchester**  
**Planning Appeal Ref: APP/A1530/W/25/3363144**

I am writing regarding the above development in my constituency because I believe the current proposal put forward by Countryside Homes, a unit of Vistry Group, is a missed opportunity to further the government's strategic objectives. In its current format, the development plan misses its potential to:

- Create opportunities for economic growth
- Help revive the urban centre of Colchester
- Create a renewed sense of local pride and identity

The ABRO development is a brownfield site, a former MoD facility, within easy walking distance of the centre of Colchester. It is also adjacent to the site of Britain's only known Roman chariot racing circus. This was discovered around 20 years ago during the redevelopment of the Colchester army garrison.

As such, the site's potential to provide sustainable housing and contribute to the enhancement of local heritage is outstanding. Unfortunately, the current layout and design of the site will damage the setting of the circus and thereby squander the opportunity to establish a national-level heritage attraction that would attract visitors, create economic opportunities, and generate local pride.

Moreover, the site's 'suburban' layout and design is a missed opportunity to create a more dense development that is less reliant on car transport and encourages more active travel into the city centre.

In consultation with the organisation 'Create Streets', the locally-based architect Francis Terry has developed some small modifications that would enhance the setting of the Roman Circus and increase the number of housing units. I think that it offers a much better use of the site, much more in line with the government's missions. I have attached a computer rendering of the two plans for comparison.



The development was refused by the Colchester City Council Planning Committee on design and other grounds earlier this year, but this decision has been appealed by Countryside. An appeal is due to begin on 8 July 2025.

As the MP for Colchester, I would like to see Countryside adjust its plans to maximise the potential of the site in line with the government's national missions. On behalf of my constituents, I would like to ask you for any support that you could provide.

I have received encouraging responses on this matter in recent months from Lisa Nandy MP (Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport) and Chris Bryant MP (Minister of State for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism) and yesterday from Lucy Powell MP (Leader of the House) during Business Questions.

Best wishes



**Pam Cox MP**

Attached:

1. existing site layout as proposed by Countryside (Vistry)
2. alternative plan layout proposed by Francis Terry
3. Comparison of building designs facing Roman Circus by Countryside and Francis Terry
4. 3D visualisation of alternative design by Francis Terry



**Existing site plan produced by Countryside (Vistry)  
Diminishes the setting of the Roman Circus**

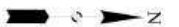
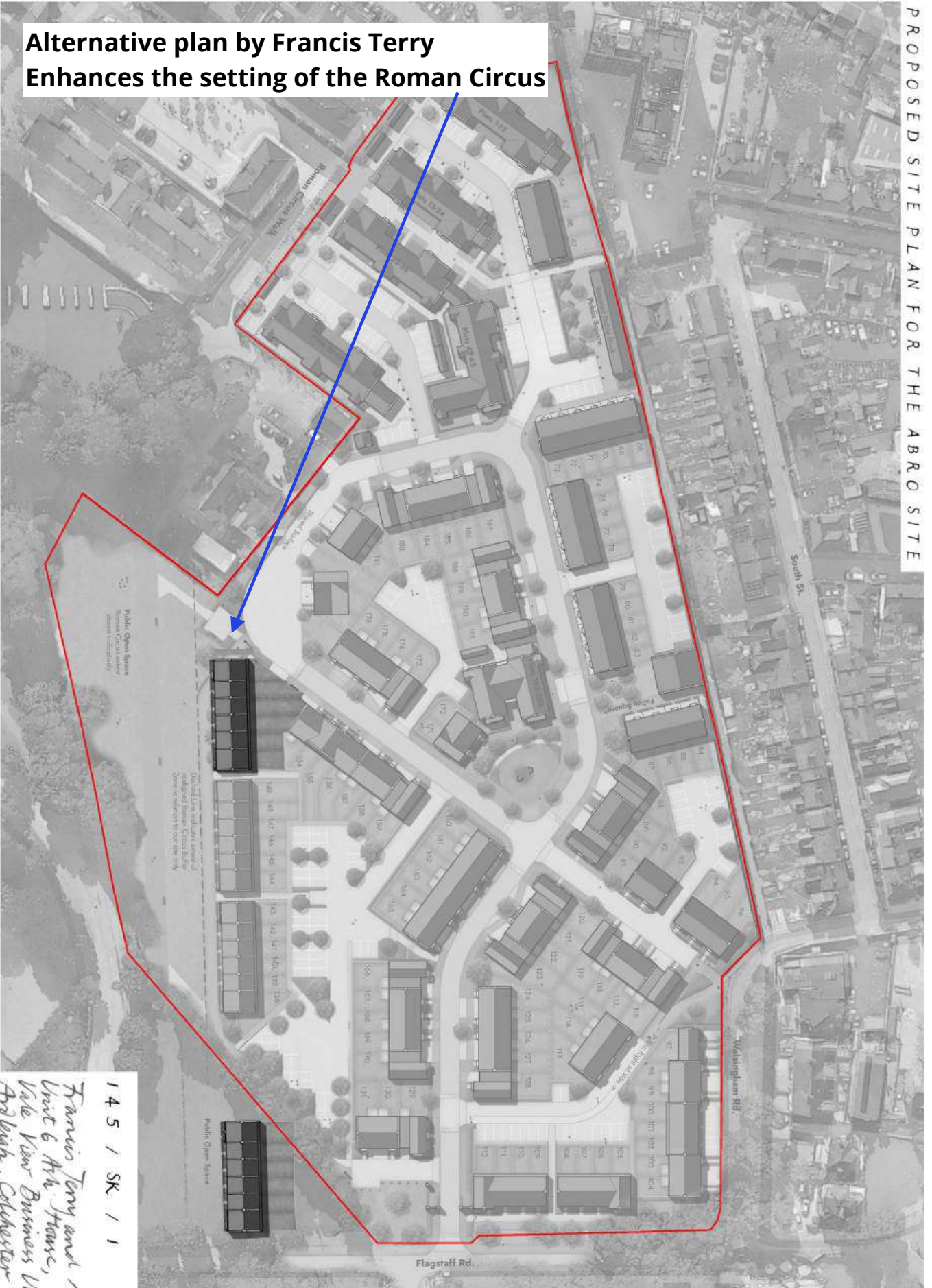




Alternative plan by Francis Terry  
Enhances the setting of the Roman Circus



PROPOSED SITE PLAN FOR THE ABRO SITE  
1:500 @ A1



145 / SK / I  
Francis Terry and Associates,  
Unit 6 4th House,  
Vale View Business Units,  
Ardblyth, Colchester  
CO7 7PL



**Countryside (Vistry)**  
**Existing design**



**Francis Terry**  
**Alternative design**



