

Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2033

Referendum Draft





Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan 2023-2033





Contents

| | |
|---|-------|
| 1. What is a Neighbourhood Plan? | 4 |
| 2. Vision for Copford with Easthorpe | 4 |
| 3. Copford with Easthorpe - The Ongoing Story | 5 |
| 4. Neighbourhood Plan - Objectives & Policies | 6-12 |
| 5. Policies | 8-12 |
| Appendices | 13-34 |





1. What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

- 1.1 The Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan provides a Vision for the future of the Villages up to 2033 but reviewed periodically. It contains a number of Policies which must be taken into account by those preparing and submitting planning applications for proposed development in the Parish and those determining planning applications including Colchester City Council and planning inspectors. It will also be used by the Parish Council in preparing consultation responses to planning applications as a consultee during the period of the plan. Alongside the Vision and Objectives, the Policies included in the Neighbourhood Plan have been developed over four years based on the views of those who live and work here, coupled with independent research.
- 1.2 The Plan will be subject to local referendum, to ensure local people have their say, as well as scrutiny by an examiner and Colchester City Council. The adopted Plan will have the same weight as planning policy documents prepared by Colchester City Council. It provides additional details that reflect local circumstances and conditions which cannot feasibly be dealt with by higher level planning authorities. It therefore form part of the Development Plan.
- 1.3 The Development Plan for the area consists of the Colchester Local Plan 2017-2033 (Section 1 adopted in February 2021 and Section 2 adopted in July 2022), the Essex Minerals Local Plan (2014) and the Essex and Southend-On-Sea Waste Local Plan (2017). Neighbourhood Plans, when adopted, also form part of the Development Plan for Colchester. Local Plan Policy SG2 allocates 120 new dwellings in Copford for the Plan period. The Colchester Local Plan (Policy SS4) allocates two sites for housing development over the plan period: land to the East of Queensbury Avenue; and land to the west of Hall Road. These sites will deliver an additional 120 houses by 2033. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate further sites for housing development.
- 1.4 Neighbourhood Plans such as this are made possible by community powers contained within the 2011 Localism Act, which seeks to provide communities with greater powers to shape the place they live in.

2. Vision for Copford with Easthorpe

- 2.1 The Neighbourhood Plan seeks to conserve and enhance the distinctive nature of our rural community, recognising the challenge of the climate emergency while taking a sustainable and optimistic view of future development by ensuring:
 - The separate identities and distinctiveness of the villages within the parish boundary (the plan area) are respected
 - The scale of growth and location of new buildings is proportionate to the size of the village and designed to retain the sense of space and community well-being in the villages
 - Building is planned to meet a broad range of local housing needs
 - Opportunities are provided to actively favour ecologically sustainable building, including self-build and

- small developments with a low or zero carbon footprint
- A successful economy which provides local employment, accommodating small businesses and retaining agriculture
- Conservation, biodiversity and green open spaces are at the heart of the plan
- Improved connectivity within the Parish promoting sustainable travel, with footpaths, cycle ways, safe roads, and rail access.
- Improved community amenities

3. Copford with Easthorpe - The Ongoing Story

3.1 The Parish of Copford with Easthorpe comprises three distinct villages, Copford, Easthorpe, and Copford Green, the latter being a designated conservation area. Copford with Easthorpe is a vibrant, modern community, but retaining a largely agricultural landscape. Positioned with direct connections to road, rail and airport infrastructure, the Parish straddles ancient roads, has 45 listed buildings and an eclectic mix of housing. Its varied natural environment, typical of north Essex, reflects rich history, with ancient fields and lines of historic oak trees. Long-established working farms contribute strongly to the rural landscape. This juxtaposition of rural setting and transport connections make the villages appealing yet vulnerable, with an absolute need for careful, sensitive planning.

3.2 The character of modern day Copford with Easthorpe has been shaped since pre-Roman times, the remains of which have been found in places such as Hall Road. The Roman invasion of nearby Colchester in AD 43 changed the direction of our history, reminders of which are evident throughout the parish. The northern extremity of the parish is traversed by London Road, following the course of Roman Stane Street. Easthorpe also lies on an old Roman road. A Roman villa stood north of Copford Church and Hall. Much of Copford Church is built of Roman tile and brick, and there is similar evidence in Easthorpe Church. The parish has an intriguingly named "Roman River" though its name is of uncertain origin.

3.3 Over the centuries and as woodland was cleared, the parish developed its agricultural character, which has remained up to the present day. Until recently, development was limited to a few scattered farmhouses and cottages, a cluster of houses at Copford Green and piecemeal development along London Road during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the 20th century, both sides of London Road and School Road have undergone ribbon development and more recently, there have been further developments of land off London Road and Church Road in Copford, and at Easthorpe.

3.4 Overall, such building has had little impact on the character of the parish, which remains what it has been for centuries – agricultural. By far the greatest part of the parish comprises large, open fields interspersed with woodland and magnificent solitary oak trees. Open countryside and rural walks abound, with wide horizons; extensive, unbroken views and big skies to delight the eye and refresh the spirit. Such is the heart and soul of the parish.





3.5 As nearby Colchester rapidly grows, it is vital to safeguard the special rural character of Copford with Easthorpe. Some new development is necessary and newcomers refresh the vitality of the villages. But such development must respect and enhance the heritage and ongoing story of the parish, for the continuing enrichment of current and future generations.

4. Neighbourhood Plan Objectives and Policies

4.1 The Objectives set out below provide a clear view of the priorities, hopes and ambitions of the Neighbourhood Plan on behalf of the Community. Following on from these Objectives, the Policies set out what will be supported, what will be done and actions which will, in the interests of the Parish, be discouraged or opposed.

Objective 1 *Parish Identity*

- Ensure that the villages maintain their separate and distinctive rural identity
- Protect and improve the most valued areas of biodiversity and landscape

See policies CE1, CE2, CE3

Objective 2 *Design and Character*

- Ensure that all development maintains and enhances the character of the area, respecting local heritage alongside high quality new architecture

See policies CE3, CE4, CE5 and AECOM Copford Design Guidance and Codes (pages 31-73)

Objective 3 *Housing*

- Favour and promote the use of brownfield sites over greenfield land
- Ensure a mix of well designed, high quality housing that meets local needs.
- Favour small developments, including self-build, with a commitment to low or zero carbon housing

See policy CE4 and AECOM Copford Design Guidance and Codes (pages 54-75)

Objective 4 *Transport and getting around*

- Promote an enhanced, connected network, enabling sustainable travel by public transport, foot and cycle
- Protect and enhance accessibility, linkages and permeability by utilising existing historic tracks, foot paths, roads and green spaces
- Discourage the use of local roads by non-agricultural heavy goods vehicles
- Manage parking provision by considering and influencing provision in each development

See policy CE5 and AECOM Copford Design Guidance and Codes (pages 76-84)

Objective 5 *Infrastructure and Community Use*

To ensure that infrastructure is sufficient for existing and future needs, the plan requires:

- New facilities for all age groups as well as protecting and improving the existing ones
- The protection of reliable, long-term supply of water services and all utilities serving the community

See policies CE4, CE5, CE6

Objective 6 *Economy*

- To encourage local employment, proportionate in scale to the villages
- To enable local job opportunities and provide services for local residents and visitors

Objective 7 *Environment and Climate Emergency*

Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council takes the climate emergency and environmental impact in the Parish very seriously. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is developing a National Framework for the protection and stewardship of the natural environment through positive Environmental Land Management (ELM), which the Neighbourhood Plan needs to recognise and facilitate.

Our objectives are to:

- minimise the generation and emission of greenhouse gases by adopting alternatives to fossil fuels to heat new homes
- provide community owned renewable energy projects
- provide energy efficient lighting, particularly to reduce light pollution
- include measures to control and reduce air, light and noise pollution
- promote the collection, control, conservation and effective use of water, including surface water
- provide facilities to encourage additional recycling, including public and household waste
- promote sustainable transport, favouring cycling, walking and connection to public transport

See policies CE3, CE5, CE7 and AECOM Copford Design Guidance and Codes (pages 87-88).





Policy CE1 Settlement Boundaries and Development:

The Neighbourhood Character Assessment describes the separate character and identities of the three village areas within the Parish, namely Copford, Copford Green and Easthorpe and their respective settings within the rural landscape. Residents value the individuality of these distinct villages and thus wish to ensure that they are not damaged by coalescence either with each other; or with neighbouring parishes; or with any significant new, adjacent developments. Large-scale development in adjoining parishes would directly impact on and significantly diminish the rural character of Copford with Easthorpe. See Aecom Design Guidance and Codes p44 for further detail (hereafter “AECOM”).

This Policy protects the Parish by resisting development which may lead to the merging of separate village settlement areas; coalescence with neighbouring parishes; the loss of agricultural land; damage to the rural character of the Parish; and urban sprawl. The Neighbourhood Plan is fully compliant with Habitat Regulation assessment (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

The Policy:

New development within the settlement boundary as shown on the map on p23-24 of this plan, will be supported in principle, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of this plan. Land outside the defined settlements will be treated as open countryside, where new development will be restricted to that which is appropriate in a rural location and will therefore be subject to Local Plan Policies ENV1, OV1 and OV2 as appropriate. Development which would tend to result in coalescence of the individual settlements of Copford, Copford Green and Easthorpe, or the parish of Copford with Easthorpe and any adjoining parishes, will not be supported.

Policy CE2a Natural and Ecological Environment, Open Spaces and Views

The policy seeks to protect areas of existing open space, views and the bio-diversity of the natural environment which underpins the character of those places within the landscape.

The idea of a ‘view’ is an emotive one, often a matter of personal connection. The parish has a varied landscape, blessed with diverse habitats and many views across fields which, in turn, have been shaped by routeways, settlement and human activity for thousands of years, often in very subtle ways which are not immediately obvious. This ‘quiet’ beauty needs to be acknowledged and should inform high quality development where it is permitted so that the landscape of the parish harmoniously blends new and old.

New development should take every available opportunity to enhance existing open space, views and the environment as well as providing new amenities; and should settle into a blend which represents the periods

through which the parish passes, with attention paid to changing needs alongside the biodiversity and landscape which is the bedrock for the continuing story of the village.

AECOM, in particular SL01, page 35; SL03, pages 44-45; RC01, pages 46-51; and LC, page 54

The Policy:

Proposals for new development should take account of Local Plan policies ENV1 (Environment), ENV3 (Green Infrastructure), DM17 (Retention of Open Space and Recreational Facilities) and DM18 (provision of Public Open Space) as appropriate.

Policy CE2b Essex Coast RAMS Policy

Habitat Regulations Assessments have been completed for Colchester's Section 1 Local Plan and Section 2 Local Plan. Both of these assessments identified that the in-combination effects of the Section 1 and Section 2 Local Plans (including the cumulative effects of the Section 2 allocations), together with neighbouring local planning authorities Local Plans and neighbourhood plans are likely to adversely affect the integrity of European designated nature conservation sites (habitats sites), in particular the Colne Estuary Special Protection Area and the Blackwater Estuary Special Protection Area (both are protected under the Ramsar international treaty) and also the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation.

In view of that, Colchester City Council is working with eleven other Greater Essex local planning authorities, and Natural England, on the Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS). The Essex Coast RAMS is a strategic solution to protect the Essex coast from the recreational pressures of a growing population. A RAMS is usually driven by challenges and opportunities arising from planning issues. RAMS generally applies more broadly than at a single designated habitat site, provides strategic scale mitigation and enables the development of a generic approach to evidence collection and use.

Financial contributions will be sought for all residential development, which falls within the zones of influence, towards a package of measures to avoid and mitigate likely significant adverse effects in accordance with policy SP2 of the Shared Strategic Section 1 Plan and policy ENV1 (Environment) of the Section 2 Colchester City Local Plan. This includes development allocated in Neighbourhood Plans within Colchester City. The whole of Colchester City is located within the zone of influence. Details of the zones of influence and the necessary measures are included in the Essex Coast RAMS Strategy Document and Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

In addition to payment of the RAMS tariff, all development sites over 100 dwellings 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.

The Policy:

ESSEX COAST RECREATIONAL DISTURBANCE AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION STRATEGY (RAMS)

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.

Policy CE3 Design and Character

This policy requires that all new developments meet the highest standards of design, taking account of sources of best practice.

The Plan is ambitious in encouraging imaginative, high quality development which merges well with the mixed character of the Parish, while not seeking to imitate. This policy expects developers to meet local needs and respond to the challenge of climate emergency, while respecting the character of the Parish and its unique sense of place. Copford design guidance and codes provides clear principles for new developments. Good design can also enhance affordability. This policy champions a principle that affordable homes will not be compromised to reduce cost.

The AECOM Guidance and Codes commissioned by Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council when seen alongside policies within Colchester Local Plan, will ensure high standards of design and character.

The guidance Protects the positive features of the eclectic characteristics of the local area and its heritage as defined in the Heritage list. It will ensure that the use of materials that are sympathetic to the palette within the parish and maintains this diversity Government Guidance forms a basis for technical standards, set out in:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard>;

National Design Guide and LTN 1/20

See AECOM design Guidance and Codes p14/ F2, P17/ F7, P30/F41, P26/ F15, P15-28 photos.

The Policy:

Proposals for new development should take account of Local Plan Policies SP7 (Creating Quality Spaces), CC1 (Climate Change), DM9 (Development Density) and DM15 (Design and Amenity) as appropriate. In addition, regard should be had to Copford's Design Guidance and Codes document (Aecom 2021) which should be seen as an essential supporting resource in the implementation of this Neighbourhood Plan

Policy CE4 Housing

The Colchester Local Plan has allocated two sites for development. The Neighbourhood Plan does not seek to allocate further sites for housing development, being focussed on ensuring adherence to high standards of design and impact on the quality of life within developments.

The Policy:

Proposals for new housing development within the Parish will be supported where other relevant policies in the Colchester Borough Local Plan and in this neighbourhood plan are complied with, including those dealing with sustainability of development and its impact on the natural and built environment (such as ENV1 and DM15). Particular account must be taken of Local Plan policies DM9 (Development Density), DM8 (Affordable Housing) and DM10 (Housing Diversity). Encouragement will be given to housing schemes which enable home working.

Policy CE5 Transport and getting around

Transport policy must increasingly take account of major changes in our way of life as well as the threats facing us into the future. The International Climate Emergency, together with the changes to work – life balance in a post-Covid world will offer significant challenges. To continue in the same way as we have always done in the past is simply not an option.

There are stark differences in access to public transport within the parish. Eastthorpe is isolated from public transport, while Copford Green is a long walk from the only bus route on London Road. This inequality of access to public transport in the Parish means that cars will continue to dominate, thus creating a local strategic need for reduced car dependency and better infrastructure for walking and cycling.

The Policy:

This Neighbourhood Plan supports policies in the Colchester Borough Local Plan to move toward more sustainable patterns of transport, in particular policies SP6B (Infrastructure and Connectivity: Transportation and Travel), ENV3 (Green Infrastructure), DM20 (Promoting Sustainable Transport and changing Travel behaviour), DM21 (Sustainable Access to Development) and DM22 (Parking). In addition and as appropriate to the scale and nature of development, proposals will be required to have regard to relevant sections of the AECOM Copford Design Guidance and Codes document, 2021.





Policy CE6 Environment

The Neighbourhood Plan endorses and adopts all Policies in Colchester Local Plan which address Environment and Ecology, particularly DM25 (Renewable Energy), ENV5 (Pollution and Contaminated Land), and DM15 (Design and Amenity).

The AECOM Copford Design Guidance and Codes pages 71–72 and 87-93 provides further guidance on Street Lighting and Dark Skies.

The Neighbourhood Plan emphasises that Copford with Easthorpe is proud of its rural character and conscious of the adverse impact of unrestricted artificial light at night.

The Policy: Dark Skies

In order to protect the beauty of the night sky, all development should include measures to control light pollution for the better preservation of the countryside, at night and the well-being of resident wildlife.

The History and Landscape of Copford with Easthorpe

The following sections summarise and evaluate the history and landscape features of the Parish. This will help draw a picture of Copford with Easthorpe as places with history and distinct character, so that the Objectives and Policies can be seen in the context of a strong sense of history and place.

Historical Setting of the Parish

Today's civil administrative Parish of Copford with Easthorpe lies five miles to the west of Colchester. It was created in 1949 when the villages of Easthorpe and Copford were united, the area of the latter having been considerably reduced from its former size.

The Parish comprises, to the north and east, Copford which surrounds and includes the distinctive and picturesque nucleus of Copford Green (a conservation area); and, to the south and west, rural Easthorpe.

The name Easthorpe is of eighth century Danish origin, meaning eastern farm or hamlet. The name Copford (Coppanforde in the 10th century) is assumed to derive from "Coppa's Ford", spanning the Roman River where a Grade 2 listed 18th century bridge now stands on the eastern boundary of the Parish.

Much of the Parish goes back to Roman times, though evidence has recently been found of early Iron Age occupation off Hall Road near Keepers Cottage. To the north, London Road is part of Stane Street, an Iron Age trackway which was subsequently made into a major Roman road. To the south, Easthorpe Road may have led westwards from the famous Romano-British settlement at Gosbecks, through Copford and Easthorpe, to join the main Roman road to London. There have been Iron Age, Bronze Age and Roman finds north-west of Copford Hall; in the Hall grounds; and in the adjoining churchyard. A sizeable Roman villa stood on land to the north of Copford Hall. Much of the brick and stone with which both Copford and Easthorpe churches are built is of obvious Roman origin.

Over the centuries, the populations of Copford, Copford Green, and Easthorpe have fluctuated but have always been small, numbering just a few hundred until modern times. In 2019, the population is estimated to be 1900, living in some 680 dwellings of which 69 are in Easthorpe.

In the Middle Ages there were scattered cottages and farms throughout the parish. A number of ancient buildings dating from the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th centuries still survive today (there are 45 listed buildings in the Parish). Little was added until the 19th and 20th centuries: then at various times individual houses were built along School Road (north of Copford Green) and London Road, and sporadically elsewhere. More recently, a larger





estate has been built at Queensberry Avenue off London Road; and some smaller developments in Copford and Easthorpe. But the greatest part of the Parish has seen little development and retains its historic aspect of open fields and agricultural landscape. Many buildings in the Parish back onto or overlook farmland. Most are within a few minutes' walk of the fields and the public footpaths.

Historically agriculture dominated the economy of the Parish and is still a vital element. There are however a number of small commercial and industrial businesses trading principally on the southern side of London Road, with a small number based in Copford Green.

The historic jewel of Copford is the Church of St. Michael and All Angels, which lies next to Copford Hall to the south-east of the Parish. The Norman church dates from about 1125 and is described by Nikolaus Pevsner in his seminal work "The Buildings of England", as "the most remarkable Norman parish church in Essex". The church was built with a tunnel vault roof, which is exceedingly rare in England. Unfortunately, this had been removed by 1390, but the original Norman piers which supported the stone vault still remain. More fortunately, the apsidal arch and the rare semi-circular eastern apse, with a semi-domed vaulted ceiling, remain almost exactly as they were built.

But the church's principal glory is its Romanesque medieval wall-paintings, which date from the time the church was built. Pevsner described them as "by far the most important medieval wall-paintings in Essex", and Simon Jenkins (England's Thousand Best Churches) similarly as "among the best in England". Hidden with lime-wash at the time of the Reformation, the paintings were re-discovered in the nineteenth century. About a third of the original paintings survive, the most important being The Raising of Jairus's Daughter which is of national significance; and the depiction of Christ In Majesty, seated on a Byzantine throne, which gazes down from the eastern semi-circular apse. Some of the paintings still retain examples of the compelling richness of colour with which the whole interior of the Church must have once glowed. After some inexpert repair in the nineteenth century, the paintings were painstakingly conserved in the early 1990s with subsequent periodic maintenance.

The Hall is a striking Grade 2 listed country house, comprising a square red-brick building with stone dressing and ornamentation. Its current facade is Georgian, the result of alterations in the early 1800s. But the majority of the structure dates from 1720, and parts of the interior to the early 1600s: an early seventeenth century mural has been found on an internal timber-framed wall. Some of the outbuildings, including the former farmhouse, close to the north side of the house may date from the sixteenth century or even earlier. The landscaped gardens are attributed to Richard Woods, landscaper of Wivenhoe Park, another significant building, particularly as the subject of a painting by John Constable and now a part of the Essex University estate.

The overall aspect of the Hall, its stables and other outbuildings, and the adjacent Church was described by

Pevsner as “almost the beau ideal of what to a foreigner is an English landscape scene”, an observation which is enhanced today by the addition in the scene of the charming archetypal English Village cricket ground.

At the eastern boundary of the Parish on the London Road, one finds Copford Place, dating from 1698; Brook Cottage and Brewers Cottage, both built in the seventeenth century; and the eighteenth-century Old Mill House (which was the subject of a drawing by John Constable).

Clearance of woodland gave rise to picturesque Copford Green, another gem of the Parish located at the southern end of School Road. Around the Green and in its immediate vicinity are a number of disparate and distinctive houses, including The Pink (formerly Grays, fifteenth century); a block of former almshouses; The Old Post Office; The Trellis House (sixteenth century); Green Farm (seventeenth century); Vineyards (late fifteenth, early sixteenth century); and the popular Alma Pub built in 1857. An attractive 17th century cart lodge stands at the northern end of Copford Green, and beyond it stands the Village Primary School, built in 1851 and recently extended to accommodate growing demand in the Parish and its environs. Mascotts Farm stands at the top of School Road, and was recorded in 1350, with renewal in the late sixteenth century and subsequently.

To the east and north of Copford Green lies Copford Plains, known by this name since the mid eighteenth century and famous for oak trees which continue to be a strong part of Copford’s identity.

Easthorpe remains a small rural village of some 872 acres, with a population of just 185 persons. Formerly a separate parish, it united with Copford in 1949. Its long history, including as a probable site of Roman settlement, has been previously referred to. Today, its surviving significant historic buildings are extant evidence of its long past. Easthorpe Hall is recorded in the Domesday Book (1086), although the current house is of fifteenth century origin. Easthorpe Church was built in the early twelfth century (in part using Roman brick and tiles). The two bayed Well Cottage and the timbered framed and plastered St. Mary’s Grange (the former surprisingly large Rectory) date from the fifteenth century. Other significant properties include Badcocks Farm, Little Bircholt Farmhouse and Scotties, originally a moated farmhouse.

The remainder of the housing is a mix of nineteenth century cottages and more recent housing built in the first half of the twentieth century, mostly along Easthorpe Road. A small modern housing development was built in the village centre in the mid 1960s.

To the west of the village centre, where Easthorpe Road joins the A12, there is a Point-to-Point Racecourse. Part of this land was formerly a World War One night landing field, associated with airfields and Zeppelin defences at Stow Maries, Goldhanger, and St. Osyth.

The Church of St Mary, Easthorpe, is built of mixed materials including Roman brick. The nave and west end of the chancel, which originally had an apse, are twelfth century; and the north and south doorways are of the





same period. Originally, the chancel walls were probably decorated with murals: remnants of paintings in the splays of a nave window may be thirteenth century. The apse was destroyed in the thirteenth century, and the chancel was lengthened. In 1910, the church and its fifteenth century south porch were extensively restored.

The Church is ancient: all or part of five of its windows date from the twelfth century, others from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; the font is of thirteenth century origin, as is the double piscina; and the Holy Water stoup set into the south wall by the main door is fourteenth century.

It will be apparent from the foregoing that the Parish of Copford with Easthorpe has a long rural heritage. Despite gradual development over the last 120 years, the overall impact on the historic character of the Parish has been light. It is a valued, unspoiled rural landscape, adjacent to the increasingly dense Western boundary of Colchester, yet distinct from it.

Neighbourhood Character Assessment for Copford with Easthorpe

This should be referenced alongside Colchester Landscape Character Assessment.

The Parish of Copford with Easthorpe, described by the poet Matthew Arnold as “deeply rural” lies within the farmlands of South West Colchester. Its landscape is formed from Boulder Clay, sand and gravel, supporting a mix of small pasture and large arable fields, which are cut through by the gentle slopes of the Roman River valley, and profuse areas of deciduous woodland including a substantial proportion of oak. The landscape and setting of the parish are characterised by an ancient village centre at Copford Green, forming a nucleus which then connects via ribbon residential development along School Road to London Road at the Northern end. London Road follows the line of Roman Stane Street, connecting the parish to Stanway and Colchester to the East, with the A12, Marks Tey and its railway station to the west. Rural Rectory Road connects Copford Green to Easthorpe at the south western edge of the parish.

The Parish of Copford with Easthorpe contains 45 listed buildings and the historic form of the settlement is still readable as connected places which have evolved from pre-Roman to modern times.

The topography of Copford with Easthorpe consists of a broad, low plateau 30-40 m above sea level with the Roman River Valley and Domsey Brook being the main water courses, both of which have flood plains and flood risk areas by them.



Evaluation of distinct areas and features

London Road

London Road is one of three distinct areas in the Parish of Copford with Easthorpe, which, seen together, describe a varied landscape, characterised by distinct origins. London Road follows the line of Roman Stane Street, crossing the Roman River over Stanway Bridge, which occupies the likely site of "Coppa's Ford", which may have given the village its name. The ancient route is bordered by residential and light commercial development, built sporadically over a long period, including 17th century houses e.g. Brook Cottage, Brewers Cottage and Copford Place, with dwellings, business premises and community buildings added through the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, including Mill House, the Quaker Meeting House, Hope Villa, the Old Dairy, houses built on the site of the old windmill and a handsome Georgian lodge, named on the 1876 map as Copford Lodge. The Mill House was the site of a windmill drawn by John Constable but demolished in the 20th century and replaced by detached houses in the 1970s. This eclectic street scene along a long-used route makes a distinct and vital part of the parish.

While the varied built environment along London Road is its visible face, it is the land to the rear on both the north and south sides of London Road which form the fabric of a rich rural and ancient landscape which typifies the quiet beauty and distinct character of Copford. The individually built houses lining the South of London Road collectively include a large green buffer to the rear which borders a substantial arable field between Hall Road, Pits Wood and School Road, forming a central 'Green Lung' in the village. Land to the north of London Road includes grazing and woodland, once part of the farmland attached to Copford Place, forming an important rural boundary with the A12 trunk road. These areas have equal significance as rich habitat for plants, animals and birds, including species which are under pressure elsewhere. The presence of a small trading estate in London Road including light industrial units and a BT Exchange built over the 20th century makes this area of Copford distinct and presents flexible employment and development potential for the parish.

London Road has been a key route; the High Road to London, represented in successive maps including Chapman and Andre (1777). The road can maintain its significance in a re-imagined parish in which connectivity and transport need to be environmentally responsible and responsive to local needs. The road is wider than expected at various points, which would allow this to form a green transit corridor, capable of supporting pedestrian and cycle routes, while enabling future sustainable public transport with the exclusion of non-essential heavy commercial traffic. Such re-development underlines the on-going story and significance of this well-trodden route as part of the parish with the potential to embrace the evolution of human need, while respecting equally the natural world through which it passes.





Hall Road

Ancient Hall Road is a single-track country lane which leads off London Road at the north-eastern periphery of the parish. At its London Road end, the lane is flanked by eight homes built over time including 3 bungalows, a contemporary house and further cottages, the oldest being Keepers Cottage which, although not listed, is a historic, picturesque landmark, dating from the 16th century. Running southward, the lane connects to Copford Hall and Copford Church, then joining historic Aldecar Road and the southern boundary of the parish. The road passes through Pits Wood, another rich and important feature of the parish with its woodland-covered gravel pits and pond, economically important over the centuries and latterly becoming an important recreational amenity. Comprised partly of metalled road, but otherwise a time-worn cart and footway, Hall Road carves and undulates its way through the landscape which drops eastward to the Roman River and rises westward over rolling fieldscape to School Road. Archaeological accounts show the road to have been at least Roman and probably Iron Age in origin. Abundant scattering of Roman brick and tiles provide evidence of at least one settlement and the likelihood of a substantial Roman Villa along the line of Hall Road.

Meadowlands, commonly known as the Queensberry area.

This mature development of 2,3, 4 and 5-bedroom, brick-built houses and bungalows was built between 1986 and 2000s, consisting of Queensberry Avenue, Hedgelands, Foundry Lane, Coppingford End, Westbury Close and Grantley Close. The plots are generous with most homes having double garages, off road parking, with front and rear gardens. All adopted roads have pedestrian pathways and street lighting. Access to the development is via a single entrance road from London Road, leading into Queensberry Avenue. The development is built in an area originally used as small-scale greenhouse and agricultural production, with a number of other small-scale businesses including a foundry, scrap metal merchant and car repair.

Subsequent use of the land for scrap reclamation and in-filled ponds of the old brickworks, altered land heights.

The requirement for soil-based gases to be monitored and mitigated as part of the development process has made this now a stable, safe, and popular residential location.

Just beyond the entrance to Queensberry Avenue is a children's' play area and recreation field owned by Copford with Easthorpe Parish Council and registered as an area of public open space. There is a small, wooded area at the bottom of the recreation field, leading onto privately owned woodland which adjoins the A12. A field-side track and the remains of a pond connect the estate to woodlands which then continue parallel to the A12.

At the far end of Westbury Close there is a shared path which allows pedestrians and cyclists access to London Road. Foundry Lane derives its name from the long-gone brass casting works and now forms access between the London Road, the estate and woodlands beyond. At the Eastern end of the cul-de-sac of Queensberry Avenue, a small 'ransom strip' was originally owned by the developers and is now retained by a sheltered housing concern. Following this strip is a partially tarmacked public footpath (FP1) leading in one direction to London Road and

in the other, to Track 1 which connects the wooded area from the Foundry Lane wood to grazing land between London Road and the A12. Track 1 leads on to the Roman River, passing behind Copford Place (see London Road section).

The wooded areas close around the Queensberry area, Footpath 1 and Track 1, contain numbers of mature trees and shrubs, some over 70 years old, including Oak, Beech, and conifers, though no trees are currently assigned Tree Preservation Orders. The woodland provides habitat for a range of animals and birds, including deer, rabbits, foxes, badgers and green woodpeckers.

School Road

Leading southward from London Road at the western edge of the parish, School Road is the main artery between the London Road, Copford Green and onward to Easthorpe. The road winds down a gentle hill passing on its eastern side, the Village Hall and the footpath into the Eastern side of Pits Wood, then onward past Copford School to Copford Green, forking along Rectory Road to Easthorpe on the right and to the left toward Birch.

The carriageway is of reasonable width, with verges outside front garden boundaries. Most houses throughout its length have countryside views giving an open countryside feel, with hedges and ditches where the road passes arable fields lined by varied cottages, many originally connected to farms.

School Road is characterised by a mix of 20th century housing infilled over decades, including bungalows and larger family houses, many improved and extended. Substantial back gardens add to the open, rural character.

Among the mix of buildings are a few notable old houses which mark the persona of School Road including Mascots House built in 1350, with later additions. Mascots Farm was arable, growing for a period PYO soft and orchard fruits and more recently sugar beet. Allendale Drive and Ashwin Avenue form a development of houses built in 1963, adjoining School Road near its junction with London Road. A recent addition of 4 bungalows and 4 houses at Ford Mews, occupies land backing onto commercial premises in London Road. A small shop, currently a fashion boutique, sits on the corner of Allendale Drive and is the only retail premises in this part of the parish.

Following School Road toward Copford Green and the Village Hall, open fields present far reaching views past the important conservation and amenity site of Pits Wood and beyond. Pits Wood was bought by the Parish Council in 1983. It is a well-used and valued amenity and nature conservation site for local people and visitors, maintained entirely by volunteers. Two recently built houses opposite the Village Hall, blend with other houses and arable fields which add to the distinctive landscape.

Further cottages, a small reservoir and a bee farm make up School Road toward the Green, along with a significant, listed early 19th Century house, Little Gore. The single form entry Copford Primary School, giving the name to





the Road and originally built in 1851, marks a turn in the road with a small green and Oak tree, beyond which the beauty of the ancient barns of Green Farm can be seen. Progressing past the barns, now houses, the landscape merges with the mix of old buildings of Copford Green. As with London Road, again it is the land on either side of School Road toward the east and west which forms the fabric of a rich and ancient landscape, which typifies the quiet beauty and distinct character of the parish.

Copford Green

Copford Green, like many Greens, was created by clearing woodland, houses then clustering around the cleared area. The majority of Copford Green lies within a registered Conservation Area. A number of Public Rights of Way cross the farms and woodlands surrounding the Green. This distinctive part of the parish comprises a pattern of roads including: Copford Green, Church Road, St Michael's Chase, Orchard Close, Aldercar Road & Rectory Road.

Copford Green has a long history of settlement probably dating back to the Roman Occupation. Distinctive, handsome houses compose a quietly beautiful and important village green landscape, including Trellis House, Green Farm House, the Old Post Office and an important medieval house, The Pinks. Searle's Cottages on Copford Green complete the scene, being located on the site of the Copford Workhouse. A cast-iron signpost on the Green emphasises a landscape which embodies slow evolution, characteristic of English villages. The former Rectory in Rectory Road became a private School in 1958 until 1985 when it became the Springfield's Nursing Home. A number of cottages are dispersed along Rectory Road, built from 1740 onwards, adding to the historic rural character of the road connecting Copford with Easthorpe.

Church Road leads from the green to the east, presenting a further mix of ancient and modern which characterises the parish. The separation of the area around the church from houses around the Green may originate from concerns about the spread of plague. The road connects St Michaels Chase, built in 1998 and Orchard Close, developed in the 1960's. Two groups of 1930s estate cottages and additional infill plots lead to the Church and Hall passing Vineyards, an important 16th Century house on the site of the earlier Pakes.

The Copford Green area merges with Copford Plains, further extending its distinct character.

Copford Plains

The "Plains" is an arable area east of Copford Green; the highest point marked as only 40m above sea level, so it may have been flooded after the end of the last Ice Age. Copford Plains is signposted from Copford Green and presents a sweeping vista of open farmland interspersed with a number of Oaks, providing a very distinctive rural setting, especially when viewed against open skies. The Plains was originally a wooded area, then subsequently an enclosed area of pasture, known by the current name from the mid 18th century.

Copford Oaks

There are a significant number of large, mature oak trees scattered throughout Copford with Easthorpe, including one outside Copford Church which is at least 300 years old. Oak trees were planted in and around the Parish

during the 17th Century as a gesture of support to ensure the national supply of shipbuilding timber for the Royal Navy. The Oak has been adopted as a symbol for the local Copford Primary School. These majestic trees add to the visual landscape and provide essential habitat for diverse species of wildlife.

Copford Hall Wood

Copford Hall Wood adds to the diverse, rich landscape of the parish. The wood was managed in the 18th Century as part of three wooded areas of Plains Wood, Potash Wood and Churchfield Wood, with much of the area around Copford Hall being heavily wooded before this time. Copford Hall Wood was originally six acres of oak and alder in the 17th Century, and is now a managed woodland of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees with some vestiges of the original woodland.

Aldercar Road, Fountain Lane and Boarded Barn Road

To the south east of the Parish neighbouring Birch and Heckfordbridge lie the winding lanes of Aldercar Road, Fountain Lane and Boarded Barn Road. These narrow rural roads bisect gently rolling farmland which is interspersed with wooded copses and criss-crossed by public footpaths.

Picturesque Aldercar Road links Church Road with Fountain Lane, extending from the Church, Copford Hall and cricket ground towards the Parish of Birch. Its name may reveal Norse origins, referring to a marsh with Alder trees. Aldercar Road and Fountain Lane are single carriageways with passing places, bordered on either side by high banks with farms and woodland rising on either side. Boarded Barn Road heads west towards Easthorpe through more level, open farmland which is straighter and has ditches to each side.

Housing is sparse, with individual farmhouses or cottages and a cluster of more modern properties around the western junction with Boarded Barn Road as Copford links to Easthorpe. Three houses of particular note; Hill Farm, Baskets and Boarded Barn Farmhouse add distinct features of this part of the parish. Far-reaching views of rolling farmland dotted with oak trees and wooded copses complete the landscape.

Aldercar woodland has diverse flora, including a large Alder coppice and rare plants such as Golden Saxifrage which are scarce in Essex, making this streamside wood of significant interest.

Copford Green to Easthorpe

A journey from Copford Green to Easthorpe starts in Rectory Road and transforms into Easthorpe Road about 2/3rds along the way. Mainly flat, with rising fields growing cereal crops, the fieldscape is interspersed with a mix of houses including large Victorian farmhouses, cottages, bungalows and a wooden barn-style house being added in the Mulberry Green section of the road. Seen as a whole, the combination of farmland and housing have over time, sympathetically evolved together in a harmonious and natural layout which has a feeling of space. Rectory Road is a popular amenity route, well-used by joggers, cyclists and walkers. This timeless road is criss-crossed by popular footpaths and bridleways connecting the area to Birch and Copford.





Easthorpe

Easthorpe is a small, rural village of some 872 acres and a population of 185, with 8th Century Danish origins. Formerly a separate parish, it amalgamated with Copford in 1949. The historic landscape has visible signs of Romano-British development with Roman bricks found in its church and a main road which connects to the Roman route to London.

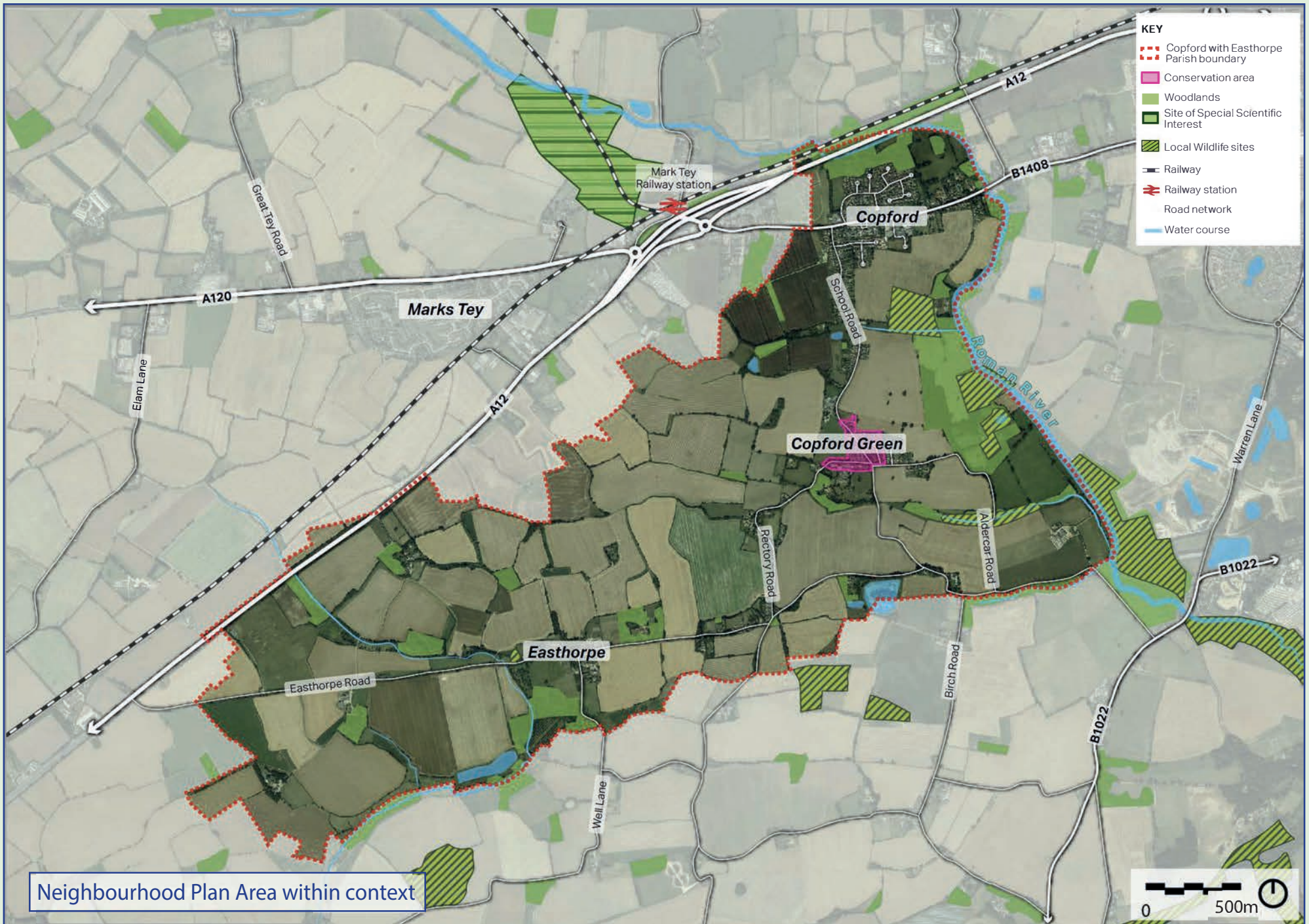
Easthorpe is between 30 and 40m above sea level, mostly composed of alluvial soil and fertile boulder clay. The area was originally heavily wooded and despite clearance over the centuries, a significant amount of woodland and planted forestry remains a feature of much of this area. Domsey Brook Pasture, the flood plain to Domsey Brook, is a central feature of the village and contains vulnerable plants named in the Essex Red Data List, including Common Meadowrue and Common Sedge.

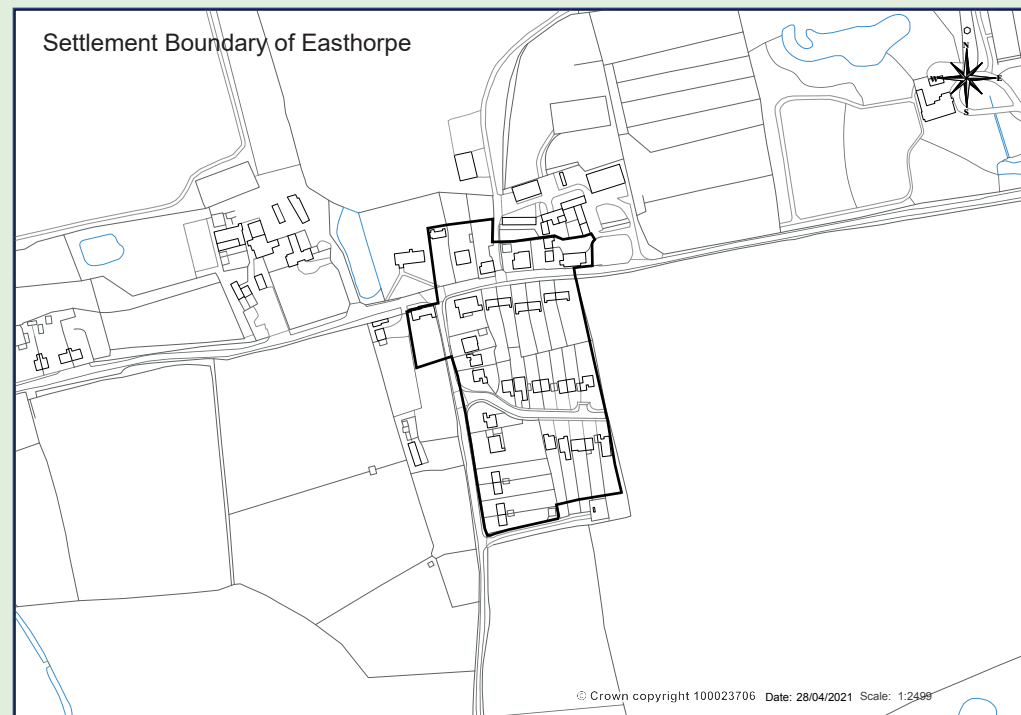
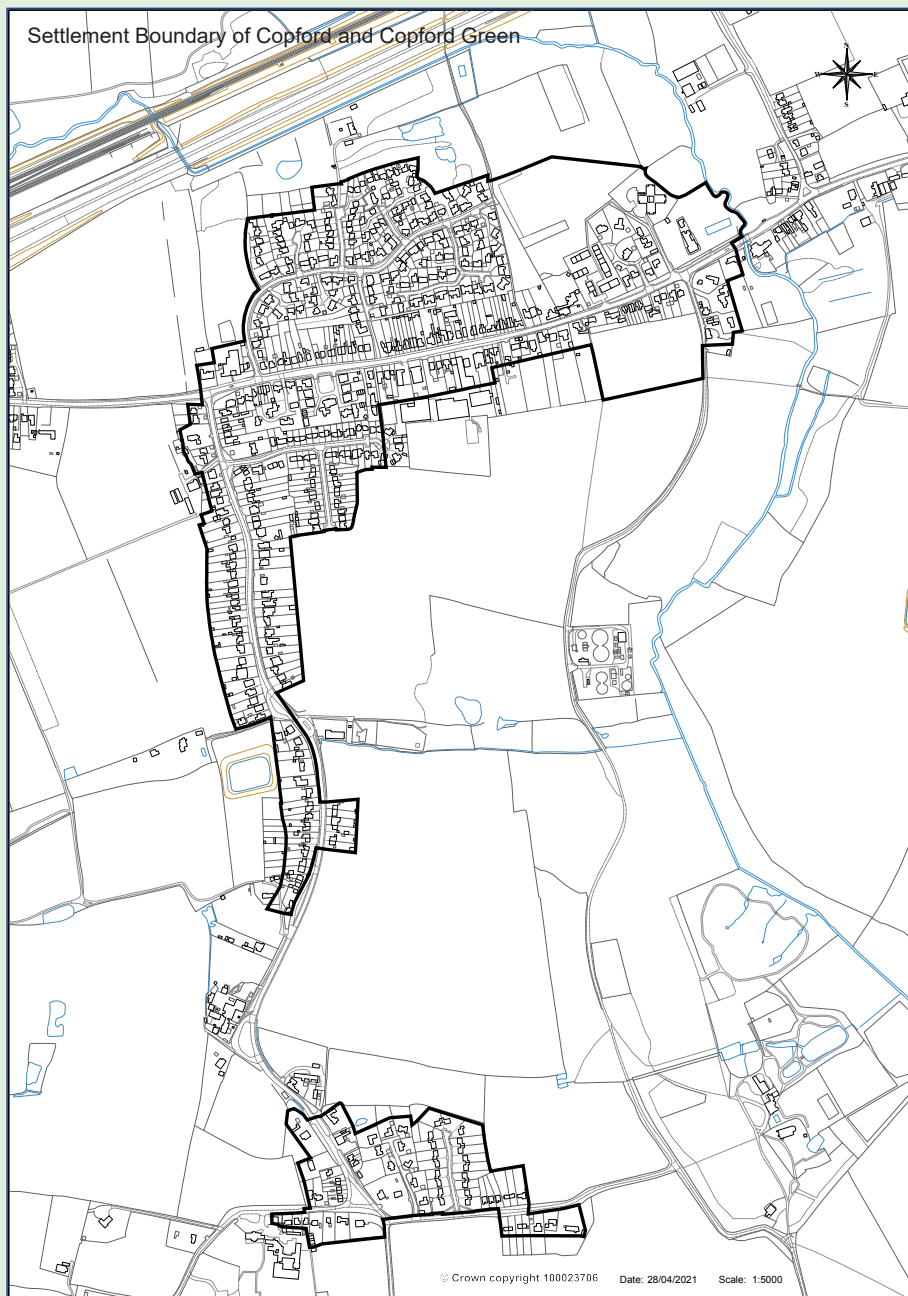
Easthorpe is deeply rural, having a built environment which has evolved over centuries to include significant historic houses and an ancient church. Roadside banks of native flowers create a pleasant aspect which adds to the overall landscape of the parish, though direct access through the village to the A12 encourages fast moving traffic which impinges on its rural identity.

Amenities in Easthorpe are limited, though the picturesque sparseness contributes to the landscape and identity of the village. There are few street lights, except in the centre of the village, a small church hall adjacent to Easthorpe church, and a single post box.

The rustic nature of Easthorpe is framed by large expanses of open farmland off the Easthorpe Road, most of which is now used to grow cereal crops. These fields contribute to the broad, open panoramas which make up the character of this part of the parish.

There are significant areas of mixed natural woodland and planted forestry, providing barriers against soil erosion, an important habitat for wildlife and managed sports shooting.





Copford

Alma Public House, Copford Green – TL92782268

grade 2 mid 19th century red brick house under a slate roof. Modern single storey extension.

Barn Fronting Road, Boarded Barn Road – TL92772194

grade 2 17th century weatherboard barn, with 5 bays and gabled midstrey

Barn to north west of Trellis House – TL92722278

17th century timber frame and weather boarded barn with 6 bays

Barn (Shire Barn) to north west of Trellis Cottage and Trellis House – TL92712277

Grade 2 – formerly a 17th century cattle shed timber framed and weatherboarded now a house known

Boarded Barn Farmhouse, Boarded Barn Road – TL92752198

grade 2 17th century plastered timber framed house under a slate roof. Site originally moated.

Boathouse at Copford Hall – TL935228

mid to late 18th century summer house/boat house on edge of lake

Brewers Cottage, 35 London Road – TL93222400

a 17th century timber framed and rendered house with modern extensions to side and rear

Brook Cottage, 1 London Road – TL93412408

17th century timber frame house with brick skin, with 18th century addition

Bywater Cottage, Rectory Road Copford – TL92242216

grade 2 pair of 18th century cottages with early 19th century alterations. Painted brick with slate roofs

Cart Lodge, Copford Green – TL927227

grade 2 17th century open timber frame with a thatched roof. Hay loft above

Church of St Michael and All Angels, Aldercar Road – TL93482270

Grade 1 listed C12 with C13 and C14 alterations, walls of rubble with Roman brick under a plain tiled roof.

Mid C12 wall paintings heavily restored in C19. Timber framed and weatherboarded belfry

Copford Hall – TL934227

grade 2 – house rebuilt c 1760 and altered in the 19th century. Grounds designed by Richard Woods

Copford Green Post Office – TL927226

grade 2 early 19th century timber framed and weather boarded house with modern extensions

Copford Place, London Road – TL933241

grade 2 timber frame house built c 1700 with brick external skin of gault brick with later extensions.

Little Gore, 118 and 120 School Road – TL92712305

a pair of early 19th century houses, grade 2 listed with mid to late 19th century addition and a modern extension



The Alma, School Road, Copford



Cart Lodge, School Road, Copford



Copford Church, Aldercar Road, Copford



Brewers Cottage, London Road, Copford



Brook Cottage, London Road, Copford



Little Gore, School Road, Copford



Old Mill House, London Road, Copford



Pink Cottage, School Road, Copford



Springfields, Rectory Road, Copford



Stanway Bridge, London Road, Copford



Trellis House, School Road, Copford



Vineyards, Church Road, Copford

Mulberry Green Farmhouse, Rectory Road – TL92212220

grade 2 – early 19th century painted brick house with late 19th and early 20th century rear additions.

Old Mill House, London Road – TL93122400

a grade 2 listed red brick house, with attic rooms under a plain tiled roof.

Mascotts, School Road – TL92552380

grade 2 – elements 15th C, main 16th, Extended in early 19th and 20th century alterations

Pantiles, Rectory Road – TL92252228

grade 2 an early 19th century house of gault brick under a slate roof

Pink Cottage, Copford Green – TL927226

grade 2 16th century timber framed house under a thatched roof and with a modern rear extension. Formerly two cottages

Shrub House, London Road – TL93162402

grade 2 listed brick and timber framed house with substantial 21st century extensions

Springfields, Rectory Road – TL925225

grade 2 early 19th century three storey house with a 20th century extensions. Formerly Copford Rectory, Copford College, and now Springfield Nursing Home.

Stables Cottage to North of Copford Hall – TL93462277

grade 2 18th century, originally of timber frame and weather boarded with front altered and given brick facing

Stable to North of Copford Place, London Road – TL933241

grade 2 18th century brick stable with plain tiled roof

Stanway Bridge, London Road, Copford – TL93222399

grade 2 – small 18th century single span red brick bridge

Trellis House and Trellis Cottage, Copford Green – TL92782272

grade 2 - 17th century timber framed house with 19th century extensions and alterations.

Upper Hill Farmhouse, Fountains Lane, Copford – TL93882223

grade 2 - 15th century hall house with cross wings

Vineyards, Church Road, Copford – TL93152254

grade 2 16th century timber framed house under tiled roof. In 19th century was divided into 5 cottages but now a single house

Windmill Hotel (later Kings Nightclub now The Manor House), London Road – TL92772386

early 19th century three storied house with cellars. Grade 2 listed

Easthorpe**Badcocks Farmhouse (formerly listed as Great Badcocks), Easthorpe Road – TL90042108**

grade listed 2 - a 15th century timber framed hallhouse, with gabled crosswings, hall rebuilt 16th century, long wall jetty wall with carved and moulded bressumer dated 1585. House previously moated

Bell House, Easthorpe Road – TL91302194

grade 2 – late 16th century house with 18th century addition

Cart Lodge to south of barn at Easthorpe Hall, Easthorpe Road – TL91152419

Grade 2 listed – timber frame weatherboarded, under a thatch roof with a hay loft

Cart Lodge to south west of barn at Easthorpe Hall, Easthorpe Road – TL91132475

grade 2 early 19th century timber framed cart lodge, weatherboarded under a thatch roof

Church of St Mary, Easthorpe Road – TL91242150

grade 1 listed church built with mixed rubble and septaria with Roman brick dressings under tiled roofs.

Dating from early 12th century. 13th century wall paintings on south east window splays

Easthorpe Green Farmhouse – TL90292198

grade 2 - 17th century timber framed house, with part brick with rendered and weatherboarded elevations under tiled roofs

Easthorpe Hall, Easthorpe Road – TL91162151

a grade 2 listed 15th century rendered timber framed house under tiled roofs, hall with gabled crosswings, 17th century extension at rear

Flispes, London Road – TL90312201

a grade 2 listed building, circa 1580, with 18 and 19th century weather boarding under a thatched roof.

House without a Name (previous Public House), Easthorpe Road – TL91282146

a grade 2 listed building with a painted brick front, tiled roofs extended in 19th and 20th century

Little Badcocks Farmhouse, Easthorpe Road – TL91362501

a grade 2 listed timber framed 17th century house with grey brick cladding in 19th century

St Mary's Grange, Easthorpe Road – TL91612160

Grade 2 early 15 century house, extended late 15th century and late 16th century, altered 19th C.*

Timber Framed Barn, Easthorpe Hall, Easthorpe Road – TL91142150

grade 2 16th century timber framed and aisled barn with gable midstrey

Well Cottage, Easthorpe Road – TL91252145

a heavily restored 15th century timber frame house, with exposed beams, jettied to north and east,



Bell House, Easthorpe Road, Easthorpe



Cart Lodge, Easthorpe Road, Easthorpe



Easthorpe Church, Easthorpe Road, Easthorpe



St. Mary's Grange, Easthorpe Road, Easthorpe



House with no name, Easthorpe Road, Easthorpe



Well Cottage, Easthorpe Road, Easthorpe

Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening

Introduction

The Habitats Regulations Assessment of land use plans relates to Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar Sites. SPAs are sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC), more commonly known as the Birds Directive. They are classified for rare and vulnerable birds, listed in Annex I to the Birds Directive, and for regularly occurring migratory species. SACs are classified in accordance with EC Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). Article 3 of this Directive requires the establishment of a European network of important high-quality conservation sites that will make a significant contribution to conserving the 189 habitat types and 788 species identified in Annexes I and II of the Directive. These sites are known as the Natura 2000 network and are referred to in the NPPF as Habitats sites. Ramsar Sites are designated under the International Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (the Ramsar Convention, Iran 1971 and amended by the Paris Protocol 1992). Although Ramsar Sites are not protected in law by the Birds and Habitats Directives as a matter of policy government has decreed that unless otherwise specified procedures relating to SPAs and SACs will also apply to Ramsar Sites.

An appropriate assessment is a decision by the competent authority, in this case Colchester Borough Council, as to whether a proposed plan or project can be determined as not having a significant adverse effect on the integrity of a European site. The integrity of a site is defined as the “coherence of its ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was classified” (Circular 06/05 paragraph 20). A fundamental element of the appropriate assessment is that the precautionary principle must be applied. In the Waddenzee judgment (ECJ Case C-127/02) the European Court of Justice ruled that a plan or project may be authorised

only if a competent authority has made certain that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the site.

The following European sites are within Colchester Borough, or in the case of the Stour and Orwell Estuaries, adjacent to the borough:

Sites Designated under the Birds Directive:

- The Colne Estuary SPA (Mid Essex Coast Phase 2);
- Abberton Reservoir SPA;
- Blackwater Estuary SPA (Mid Essex Coast Phase 4);
- Dengie Estuary SPA (Mid Essex Coast Phase 1); and
- Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA.

Sites designated under the Habitats Directive:

- Essex Estuaries SAC.

Sites designated under the Ramsar Convention:

- Colne Estuary;
- Abberton Reservoir;
- Blackwater Estuary;
- Dengie Estuary and
- Stour and Orwell Estuaries.

Pathways of impact and likely significant effects

Recreational disturbance (physical site disturbance and disturbance to birds)

Physical site disturbance

Physical disturbance relates to actual damage or degradation of habitat from direct human activities. Examples in the context of this assessment relate to damage to habitat from walking (trampling of vegetation) and the abrasion of intertidal or freshwater habitat from boat wash/anchoring. This issue is relevant to the habitats for which Habitats sites are designated (e.g. damage to saltmarsh communities on the Essex Estuaries SAC) or habitat which supports designated species (e.g. sand and gravel shores on the Colne Estuary

SPA). Recreational users can damage habitat and cause severe disturbance to wildlife, particularly nesting birds in summer and feeding and roosting waterfowl in winter.

Disturbance to birds

Many human activities have the effect of degrading parts of estuarine ecosystems through for example, over-exploitation of their natural resources and excessive discharge of wastes and pollution. However, over a third of the population nationally live in towns and cities around estuaries and so careful consideration is needed to protect these environmentally important sites and manage the increasing recreation impacts associated with a growing population.

The primary source of non-physical disturbance relates to an increase in the number of visitors to Habitats sites due to increases in housing, an associated increase in demand for recreation and tourism facilities near to these sites.

The appropriate assessment of Colchester Borough's Section 2 Local Plan concluded that there are no likely significant effects arising from recreational disturbance at Abberton Reservoir and so Abberton Reservoir can be screened out of further assessment in terms of recreational disturbance.

Zones of Influence (Zol) have been set as part of the Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS). These are based on the best available evidence and have been endorsed by Natural England. The whole of Colchester Borough lies with the Zol for various Essex Habitats sites. This means that all residential development in Colchester is likely to significantly affect the integrity of Habitats sites in-combination.

Air quality

Air pollution is most likely to affect Habitats sites where plant, soil and water habitats are the qualifying features, but some qualifying animal species may also be affected, either directly or indirectly, by deterioration in habitat as a result of air pollution. Deposition of pollutants to the ground and vegetation can alter the characteristics of the soil, affecting the pH and nitrogen levels that can then affect plant health, productivity and species composition.

In terms of vehicular traffic, nitrogen oxides (NO_x, i.e. NO and NO₂) are considered to be the key pollutants. Deposition of nitrogen compounds may lead to both soil and freshwater acidification, and NO_x can cause eutrophication of soils and water.

Central government has developed a plan to improve air quality by reducing nitrogen dioxide levels in the UK (July 2017). The plan includes a range of measures that could be taken to mitigate the impact of action to improve air quality.

Colchester's Section 2 Local Plan includes a policy, which states that proposals will be supported that will not result in an unacceptable risk to public health, the environment or general amenity due to the potential of air pollution. Proposals for developments within designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) or where development within a nearby locality may impact on an AQMA are required, first, to be located in such a way as to reduce emissions overall, and secondly to reduce the direct impacts of those developments. Applicants will be required to prepare and submit a relevant assessment and permission will only be granted where the Council is satisfied that after selection of appropriate mitigation the development will not have an unacceptable significant impact on air quality, health and well - being.

Appropriate safeguards exist in a higher tier plan and air quality can therefore be screened out of further assessment.

Water quality

A growth in population resulting from an increase in housing will result in increased demands on the wastewater treatment system and may necessitate increased discharge consents and possibly even the establishment of new wastewater treatment works. Population expansion has the potential to increase nutrient loading to the Habitats sites, with the potential for impacts on site integrity through eutrophication.

The Water Cycle Study (December 2016), which is a key evidence base document for the Colchester Local Plan and the HRA, found that only the Langham (East) Water Recycling Centre (WRC), which discharges into the River Stour, does not have sufficient capacity to accommodate additional

wastewater from the proposed increase in development within the WRC catchment. All other WRCs serving the Borough have sufficient capacity to accommodate additional wastewater/sewage from the proposed increase in development.

Water quality can therefore be screened out of further assessment.

Water resources

Unsustainable rates of abstraction reduce water flows and may result in lower flow velocities, reduced depths and reduced flow continuity that may alter ecological status. This, combined with higher concentrations of nutrients such as phosphate and nitrate may lead to algal blooms. More frequent periods of summer low rainfall are expected under current climate change prediction scenarios which may increase the environmental impact of flow problems. The largest demand for water comes from the public water supply and in order to reduce abstraction, abstractors have been tasked to use water more efficiently.

The Water Cycle Study concluded that, allowing for the planned resource management of Anglia Water Services Essex Resource Zone, Colchester Borough will have adequate water supply to cater for growth over the plan period.

Water resources can therefore be screened out of further assessment.

Urbanisation (fly tipping and predation)

The impact of urbanisation is closely linked to recreational pressure. Both result from an increase in population close to European sites. Fly tipping can adversely affect Habitats sites through the introduction of invasive species. It is becoming a greater problem in rural areas.

Predation of ground nesting birds by cats is potentially a significant issue for Habitats sites. This is particularly relevant where new housing allocations are provided within 0.5 - 1 km of a Habitats site, which is the distance recommended by the RSPB as being the typical range of influence for domestic cats. This issue in Colchester Borough relates to the predation of ground nesting species such as Little Tern and Ringed Plover.

Urbanisation can be screened out of further assessment as is approximately 10km from the Colne Estuary SPA/ Ramsar Fly tipping is an issue 400 metres from a Habitats site and predation is an issue up to 1km from a Habitats site.

Loss of offsite functional habitat

Fields in close proximity to Habitats sites often provide offsite functional habitat. The loss of these sites, whilst not part of the Habitats site, can significantly affect the qualifying species of the SPA by reducing the extent of their habitat.

Whilst habitats located further from Habitats sites may be used by qualifying species these sites are unlikely to support numbers that would lead to a likely significant effect. Owing to the location of Copford with Easthorpe 10 km distances from urbanisation section, above. Loss of offsite functional habitat can be screened out of further assessment.

Summary

Recreational disturbance is the only issue that has not been screened out of further assessment in the consideration of pathways of impact and likely significant effects. The next sections consider likely significant effects from recreational disturbance alone and in-combination.

In reality the Neighbourhood Plan policies will combine to deliver the overall scale, location and form of development in the Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan.

Likely significant effects alone

The LPA has concluded that as the neighbourhood plan does not allocate land for housing the Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan alone will not adversely affect the integrity of any Habitats sites.

Likely significant effects in-combination

The screening matrix of all planning policies within the Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan shows that:

Colchester Borough Council has carried out an appropriate assessment of

the Section 2 Local Plan. This includes a detailed in-combination assessment, which considers the in-combination effects of the Section 2 Local Plan with other neighbourhood plans and other Local Plan's across Essex, on Habitats sites. A Statement of Common Ground signed by Colchester Borough Council and Natural England, confirms that Natural England agrees with the conclusion that Section 2 will not lead to adverse effects on the integrity of Habitats sites either alone or in-combination.

The appropriate assessment of the Section 2 Local Plan recommended the implementation of an Essex Recreational disturbance Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (RAMS), including the Colne and Blackwater Estuaries. Reference to the RAMS is included in the Section 2 Local Plan. The RAMS Strategy Document, which includes a Technical Report and Mitigation Report, has been prepared and Colchester Borough Council is implementing the RAMS. A draft Supplementary Planning Document is expected to be published for consultation in January 2020.

The neighbourhood plan includes the LPAs standard RAMS policy for neighbourhood plans, which has been agreed by Natural England.

The LPA has concluded that as the neighbourhood plan does not allocate land for housing the Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan alone and in-combination will not adversely affect the integrity of any Habitats sites. The basic condition set out in Schedule 2 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 that the making of the neighbourhood development plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 is therefore met.

| Policy | Likely significant effects? | Screened out? Yes/No |
|---------------|---|---------------------------------|
| | As a policy it will not lead directly to the physical development of land and therefore will not adversely affect any European sites. | Yes |
| | As a policy it will not lead directly to the physical development of land and therefore will not adversely affect any European sites. Protecting open spaces will lead to positive effects through the provision of accessible alternative open spaces. | Yes |
| | The retention of community facilities will not result in any significant effects on European sites as they already exist. Where new facilities are to be delivered these will be at accessible locations to maximise benefits for the local community. | Yes |

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Report

1. Introduction

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes requires an environmental assessment to be made of certain plans or programmes. The objective of SEA, as defined in the Government's guidance on strategic environmental assessment, is 'to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans...with a view to promoting sustainable development' (Article 1). The SEA Directive has been transposed into UK law through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Planning Practice Guidance - Strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal: Sustainability appraisal requirements for neighbourhood plans (2014) states that 'in some limited circumstances, where a neighbourhood plan could have significant environmental effects, it may fall within the scope of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 and so require a strategic environmental assessment.'

2. The Screening Process

Colchester Borough Council, as the relevant Local Planning Authority (LPA), have been approached to provide a screening opinion on whether the proposed neighbourhood plan will require a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Whether a neighbourhood plan requires a strategic environmental assessment, and (if so) the level of detail needed, will depend on what is proposed in the draft neighbourhood plan. This document sets out that screening opinion based on the scope of, and detail contained within the Copford with Easthorpe plan.

Table 1: Establishing the Need for SEA

| Environmental Regulations Paragraph | SEA Requirement | Comments |
|---|--|--|
| 2. | Is the plan: (a) subject to preparation or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level; or (b) prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government; and, in either case, (c) required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions? | Yes, the plan is subject to preparation and adoption at local level. There are legislative and regulatory provisions in place for Neighbourhood Plans. |
| 5(2) | Is the plan (a) prepared for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, industry, transport, waste management, water management, telecommunications, tourism, town and country planning or land use, and does it (b) sets the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annex I or II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, as amended by Council Directive 97/11/EC(9)? | Yes, the plan is prepared for town and country planning purposes and sets the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annex I or II to Council Directive 85/337/EEC (urban development projects). |
| 4(c) | Is the plan or programme likely to have significant environmental effects? | No. |
| 6 | Does the plan (a) determine the use of a small area at local level; or (b) is a minor modification to a plan or programme of the description set out in either of those paragraphs? | (a) Yes, the plan determines the use of a small area of land at local level. (b) The plan is a minor modification to the Colchester Borough Adopted Core Strategy and Site Allocations and emerging Local Plan. |
| 5(3) | Has it been determined that the plan requires an assessment pursuant to Article 6 or 7 of the Habitats Directive? | No (see HRA screening opinion). |
| The local planning authority has concluded that the Neighbourhood Plan is not likely to have significant environmental effects and consequently a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is not required. The criteria specified in Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 has been taken into account in reaching this conclusion. Under regulation 9(2)(b) the consultation bodies must be consulted on this conclusion prior to the local planning authority making a formal determination. The consultation bodies were consulted and comments from Natural England and Historic England have been considered. This statement records the local planning authority's determination under regulation 9(1) that a SEA is not required. | | |

3. Significance of effects on the environment

To decide whether a draft neighbourhood plan might have significant environmental effects, its potential scope should be assessed against the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or Annex II of the SEA Directive 2001/42/EC.

When deciding on whether the proposals are likely to have significant environmental effects, the local planning authority should consult the statutory consultation bodies. Where the local planning authority determines that the plan is unlikely to have significant environmental effects (and, accordingly, does not require an environmental assessment), it should prepare a statement of its reasons for the determination. Where a statement of reasons is provided in respect of a neighbourhood plan a copy of the statement should be provided to the qualifying body in order that the statement can be made available to the independent examiner; for example by including it in the basic conditions statement.

Where a neighbourhood plan is likely to have a significant effect on the environment a strategic environmental assessment must be carried out.

The following table explores the potential scope of the Neighbourhood Plan against the criteria set out in Schedule 1 to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

4. Screening Outcome

The Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan determines the use of a small area at local level and is effectively a minor modification to the Colchester Borough Local Plan. The plan will result in positive, long term effects. However, none of these effects will be significant. Therefore, the LPA has concluded that the Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan will not require an assessment of the significant environmental effects of the plan under the SEA Directive and Environmental Assessment Regulations based on the content of the Copford with Easthorpe draft plan (18th June 2021).

Table 2: Schedule 1 Criteria for Determining the Likely Significance of Effects on the Environment

| SEA Requirement | Comments |
|---|---|
| 1. The characteristics of plans and programmes, having regard, in particular, to - | |
| (a) the degree to which the plan or programme sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources; | The plan sets the framework for development proposals within the neighbourhood plan area. Neighbourhood Plans must be in conformity with the development plan, for Colchester in this case, and so whilst there will be differences between policies (as without which there is no point in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan) the Neighbourhood Plan will effectively be a minor modification to the development plan. The plan includes policies that are specific to the neighbourhood plan area. |
| (b) the degree to which the plan or programme influences other plans and programmes including those in a hierarchy; | The plan will form part of the development plan, however strategic policies of the Borough Council's adopted plans take priority. |
| (c) the relevance of the plan or programme for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development; | The plan will promote sustainable development through addressing objectives on the following topics: water, climate emissions, sustainable travel, energy efficiency, light pollution. |
| (d) environmental problems relevant to the plan or programme; and | There are no environmental problems relevant to this plan. The qualifying body has identified problems, which this plan seeks to address. |
| e) the relevance of the plan or programme for the implementation of Community legislation on the environment (for example, plans and programmes linked to waste management or water protection). | This plan has no relevance to the implementation of Community legislation. |
| 2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to: | |
| (a) the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects; | |
| (b) the cumulative nature of the effects; | The cumulative effect of this plan and the Borough's local plan will result in positive effects. |
| (c) the transboundary nature of the effects; | There are no transboundary effects; this plan applies to the neighbourhood plan area only. |
| (d) the risks to human health or the environment (for example, due to accidents); | The plan poses no risk to human health. |
| (e) the magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected); | Only the neighbourhood plan area will be affected by this plan. |
| (f) the value and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to - (i) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage; (ii) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values; or (iii) intensive land-use; and | Copford with Easthorpe is not an environmentally vulnerable area. There are no nationally designated nature conservation sites. There are 42 buildings listed for architectural merit, including some listed, but none of these is likely to be affected by the proposals in the plan. |
| (g) the effects on areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, Community or international protection status. | The landscape surrounding the neighbourhood plan area is not recognised at national or international level. |

Asset of Community Value

The Alma Public House - this is currently the only registered asset

The following are currently being considered and may be applied for:

Cart lodge at Green Farm

Copford Church

Easthorpe Church

Copford Village Hall

Barn opposite the Cart Lodge

Non heritage sites of historic value

Village signs at Copford and Easthorpe

Wrought iron fingerposts and seat at Copford Green

Victorian red letter box c 1881 in garden wall of 43 London Road

Local views, fieldscapes and sites which have high local value and contribute to the nature of the Parish

Copford green

Copford Green Pond by the Cart Lodge

Copford Cricket Club pitch its location and looking towards Copford Hall

Pits Wood and surrounding open aspect views

Keepers Wood

Ponds behind Copford School, Wrigleys Pond by Easthorpe church

Domsey Brook

Field scapes opposite the School to Copford Woods and down to Roman River

Copford Plains viewed from Church Road

Hall Road and Aldercar Road-a protected lane

Footpaths throughout Copford and Easthorpe

St Marys' Grange setting and views

Open field and woodlands viewed from Easthorpe Road towards Birch and

Maldon Road

Copford Oaks –throughout the Parish

Residents involved in the Copford with Easthorpe Neighbourhood Plan

Core group:

Nigel & Renia Sagar

Andrew Waters

Charles Molle

Peter O'Donnell

Steve Braund - Parish Councillor

Linda Gossett - Parish Councillor

Graham Barney - Parish Councillor

Judy Moland - Parish Councillor

Other residents who have been involved:

Helen Hogan

Steve Hord

James French

Neil Gilbranch

Peter Symkiss

Lisa Jenner

Michael & Sarah Monk

David Knock

Piers Comonte

Mr & Mrs Moore

Kevin Topple



To respond to this document or ask questions contact:
copfordeasthorpenp@btinternet.com or copfordwitheasthorpepc@gmail.com

Design and photography by KAT Graphics. Email: kevintopple@mac.com