

# **Colchester City Council Preferred Options Local Plan Topic Paper Employment**

**July 2025**



**Colchester**  
**Local Plan**



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## Executive Summary

A strong economy is vital for supporting residents to thrive, businesses to flourish and keep Colchester a vibrant and attractive place.

By 2041, Colchester is forecast to see a population increase of 17.3%, with a growth in working age population that could increase labour supply and boost productivity, support infrastructure development and attract investment. There are many growth sectors identified for Colchester, namely Construction, Advanced Manufacturing, Transport and Logistics, Digital and Creative, Green Economy and Financial Services. These sectors all have different demands for their locations, land space requirements and job types.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines that planning policy should set out a clear economic vision and strategy and that planning decisions should create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt taking into account local business need and development opportunities.

An Employment Study was commissioned to understand existing employment sites in Colchester, model future supply and demand of land for employment, and test the suitability of new sites put forward for employment.

The study identified 34 employment sites in Colchester, providing a range of employment types and hosting a combination of office and industrial uses. Eleven new commercial sites came forward as part of the call for sites, and these were assessed alongside those previously included in the adopted local plan.

The study also modelled several scenarios for the requirement for office and industrial floorspace. The preferred scenario found a projected (net) requirement for 92,484sqm office floorspace and a projected (net) requirement for 144,276sqm industrial floorspace over the Local Plan period. This translates to a land requirement for office uses of at least 9.2ha and at least 32.5ha for industrial uses. This requirement (demand) exceeds existing supply, meaning 10.6 ha of land needs to be allocated as additional employment sites up to 2041. Key characteristics, including locational requirements, were identified to help assess the suitability of land for new industrial and office floorspace.

Policy ST6 makes the provision for this requirement of employment land, with the land distribution aligning with the spatial strategy and growth in the Preferred Options Local Plan. It does not allocate land specifically for office or industrial use, enabling flexibility of use, but does define suitable employment uses as use classes E(g), B2 and B8.

Commercial sites put forward through the call for sites were assessed against the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) for their suitability against a number of factors. The sites were also tested through the Employment Study. As a result, 4 of the 11 sites submitted through the call for sites have been allocated

in the Preferred Options Plan, in addition to 9 sites already allocated, but not yet developed, for employment use in the adopted Local Plan.

In response to the employment study, Policy E1 reflects that existing employment sites will be safeguarded to support housing and job growth. However, competition for land from other uses is recognised. In light of changes to the Use Classes Order, and to prevent extensive loss of employment land, proposals that come forward for a change of use outside of use-class B or E(g) class must meet set criteria outlined in the policy in order to be granted planning permission.

Policies E2 and E3 also outline support for the rural economy and diversification of agricultural uses, ensuring local employment can be retained, in line with the NPPF and employment study recommendations.

## 1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1 To help with the consideration, interpretation and consultation on the Preferred Options Regulation 18 Plan and later stages of plan making, a series of Topic Papers have been prepared which summarise the evidence base and details how this evidence has helped shape the policies in the Preferred Options Local Plan. These Topic Papers are 'live' documents and will be updated as the plan making process progresses.
- 1.2 This is the Employment Topic Paper. It provides the context for Policy ST6: Colchester's Employment Needs and relevant policies in the Economy chapter of the Preferred Options Local Plan related to employment: Policy E1 Protection of Employment; Policy E2 Economic Development in Rural Areas and the Countryside; and Policy E3 Agricultural Development and Diversification.
- 1.3 This Topic Paper summarises the relevant evidence base documents, which are:
  - Colchester Employment Study (February 2025)
  - Strategic Land Availability Assessment Reports (2024, 2025)

These documents provide recently prepared, comprehensive and robust evidence sources that are drawn on at various points throughout the paper and have informed the Plan. Much of the evidence is lengthy, technical, and in part complex. The Topic Papers aim to help make the evidence clearer where necessary and also bridge the gap between the evidence and how it has informed the plan.

- 1.4 Other relevant Topic Papers include:
  - Spatial Strategy and Site Allocations
  - Retail and Town Centres

## 2. Background

- 2.1 Colchester's Economic Strategy (2022-2025) identifies that 'A strong economy is vital for Colchester. Vital to provide residents with the jobs, income, health and purpose they need; to allow businesses to flourish; to provide the infrastructure a growing place relies on; and to keep Colchester vibrant and attractive'.
- 2.2 There are a variety of sources of data on the local economy including the 2021 Census. According to the 2021 Census:
- The population of Colchester was estimated at 192,700 (an increase of 11.3% from 2011)
  - 63.3% of people in Colchester are aged 16-64 years.
  - 62.4% of people aged 16 years and over in Colchester are economically active.
  - 15.4% of people aged 16 years and over in Colchester have no qualifications.
  - 32.2% of people aged 16 years and over in Colchester have level 4 qualifications<sup>1</sup> and above as their highest level of qualification.
  - The top five occupations of people aged 16 years and over in employment in Colchester: professional occupations (20.5%); associate professional or technical occupations (14.2%); managers, directors or senior officials (13.0%); caring, leisure or other service occupations (10.5%); skilled trade occupations (10.1%).

### **National Context**

- 2.3 The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) (2024) sets out the overarching planning policy framework, supported by National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The NPPF outlines the principles that Local Planning Authorities should follow in preparing their evidence base to inform employment land policies.

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<sup>1</sup> Level 4 qualifications or above: degree (BA, BSc), higher degree (MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ level 4 to 5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, professional qualifications (for example, teaching, nursing, accountancy)

- 2.4 The NPPF states that planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. They should support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Planning policies should set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth.
- 2.5 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG): [Housing and economic land availability assessment](#) (2019) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG): [Housing and economic needs assessment](#) (2025) provide guidance on the implementation of the NPPF and includes guidance on housing and economic needs assessments, and housing and economic land availability assessments. Guidance on housing and economic needs assessments states that authorities need to prepare an evidence base to understand existing business needs, which will have to reflect local circumstances and market conditions.
- 2.6 Planning Practice Guidance requires local planning authorities to assess development needs working with other local planning authorities in the relevant functional economic market area (FEMA). The FEMA is an area that shares a number of similar economic factors with boundaries that ideally reflect the spatial level at which the local economy operates. It is not constrained by administrative boundaries but reflects the way the economy works. The Evidence Base considered the FEMA and, based on the assessment conducted, found that Colchester is particularly connected with two other local authority areas: Braintree and Tendring. Further information can be seen in paragraph 3.7 below.
- 2.7 Employment uses are defined by the Use Classes Order. For the purposes of the evidence base, employment uses are split into two: office uses and industrial uses. Changes to the Use Classes Order relating to employment uses and some town centre uses were introduced in September 2020 including a new E Use Class. Some Planning consents and evidence relating to permitted development still refers to the previous Use Class, due to the time of the date of application. The table in Appendix A sets out the current uses with the comparison to the former use.
- 2.8 The E Class is now very broad and has a number of subdivisions. These are summarised below.

What is covered by office uses:

- E(g)(i) Offices; and
- E(g)(ii) Research and Development

What is covered by industrial uses:

- E(g)(iii) Light industrial

- B2 General industrial; and
- B8 Storage or distribution

- 2.9 In 2022, the Government amended the previous Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) (Order 2015) which introduced new permitted development rights allowing certain building and development works to be carried out without the need of the normal planning process. New types of permitted development have been introduced to make it easier for people to extend their home, create new homes in existing buildings such as offices, shops and warehouses or demolish vacant previously classified B1(a), B1(b), B1(c) or C3 space and rebuild as residential. New national Permitted Development Rights introduced in 2022 allow for the change of use of some offices and employment premises to dwellings and other uses including shops, without the need for a planning application. Amendments to the Use Class Order also allow greater flexibility to change uses within high streets and town centres. This is covered in more detail in the Retail and Town Centre Topic Paper. An extract from the updated Permitted Development Rights as far as they relate to economic uses is illustrated in Appendix A. The former use classes are also included for comparison and to help with understanding where existing consents relate to the former B Class uses.
- 2.10 The significance of the changes to the Use Classes and Permitted Development Rights is that it introduces greater flexibility for changes between uses, many of which continue to be employment or other economic generating uses. Whilst this flexibility can often be welcomed as it can help ensure economic areas thrive and adapt easily in response to changing needs, it can also cause problems if too much commercial floorspace is removed from the supply.

### **Existing Local Policy and Guidance**

- 2.10 The adopted Colchester Local Plan places a focus on strengthening and diversifying local economies to provide more jobs and to achieve a better balance between the location of jobs and housing.
- 2.11 The adopted Local Plan identifies new sites for employment use including in Strategic and Local Economic Areas, protects existing employment sites from other competing uses and provides policy on the diversification of the rural economy. The evidence base supporting the adopted Colchester Local Plan includes an Employment Land Needs Assessment (2015) and an Employment Land Supply Delivery Trajectory Report (2017).
- 2.12 The [Colchester Economic Strategy](#) (2022-2025) notes that Colchester's economy is dominated by small and micro business. No one sector or employer dominates the Colchester economy. The Strategy identifies tourism, advanced

manufacturing, financial services, and retail as the primary sectors driving job creation and economic growth in Colchester, with emerging growth sectors in creative/digital/tech, care, green energy, and construction. It also acknowledges challenges such as skills gaps and income inequality.

### 3. Evidence Base

- 3.1 In accordance with the requirements of the NPPF, policies and their requirements should be based on up-to-date evidence.
- 3.2 The following evidence base documents are of particular relevance to employment and were used to inform the policies in the Preferred Options Local Plan.
- [Employment Study](#) (February 2025)
  - [Retail, Leisure and Town Centre Study](#) (November 2024)
  - Strategic Land Availability Assessment Reports
    - [Call for Sites Report](#) (February 2024)
    - [Strategic Land Availability Assessment \(SLAA\) Site Assessments Report Stage 1](#) (November 2024)
    - [Strategic Land Availability Assessment \(SLAA\) Site Assessment Report Stage 2](#) (February 2025)
  - [Sustainability Appraisal Report](#) (February 2025)
  - [Sustainability Appraisal Report Appendices](#) (February 2025)

#### **Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA)**

- 3.3 The Council has produced a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment as required by national Planning Practice Guidance. This assessment can be seen in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) reports and is informed by a Call for Sites consultation undertaken in Autumn 2023. The Call for Sites is an opportunity for the public, landowners, developers and other stakeholders to promote land for development across the city, suitable for a range of uses including commercial uses (employment, retail, sports and leisure and logistics).
- 3.4 A total of 11 sites were submitted for commercial uses as part of the Call for Sites. Some residential submissions also included an element of commercial use as part of a mixed-use scheme. The 11 sites are listed below.

Site ID	Site Name
10175	Haycocks Yard, West Mersea
10230	Land South of Doggetts Lane Service Station, London Road/A12

10488	Bullbanks Farm, Halstead Road, Eight Ash Green
10527	Land South of Factory Hill, Tiptree
10566	Land at Pattens Yard, West Bergholt
10623	Land north and south of Dobbies Lane, Marks Tey
10632	Land south of Tower Business Park, Tiptree
10647	Wakes Hall Business Centre, Wakes Colne
10663	Land off Newpots Lane, Peldon
10671	Land South of A12 and north of proposed new route of A12, Marks Tey
10677	Gateway 24, Kelvedon

- 3.5 The SLAA has been used to assess sites submitted to the council for new employment development. The [Strategic Land Availability Assessment \(SLAA\): Site Assessments Report Stage 2](#) (2025) sets out the outcomes of the SLAA site assessments of each of these sites. Potential suitable site options were then subject to more detailed testing through the plan evidence base (Employment Study) to ensure that they were suitable locations.

### Employment Study

- 3.6 AECOM was commissioned by Colchester City Council to undertake an Employment Study in 2024. The Study sets out a detailed evidence base to support the Local Plan with the specific aim to ensure that the Local Plan contains sufficient land and suitable policy approaches to drive sustainable economic growth across Colchester.
- 3.7 Key findings from the [Employment Study \(2025\)](#) are as follows:
- Functional Economic Market Area** The report assesses the functional economic market area (FEMA) using commuting data, administrative boundaries and housing and commercial property market data. The report finds that Colchester is relatively self-contained economically, with some important connections either from an economic governance perspective (administrative boundaries), market characteristics (housing and commercial property markets) and connectivity (travel to work and transport infrastructure). Based on the assessment conducted, the study concludes that Colchester is particularly connected with Tendring and Braintree local authority areas.

- **Socio-economic Profile** By 2041, Colchester is expected to see an overall population increase of 17.3%. There is expected to be growth in the working-age population, outpacing regional and national rates. This growth could increase labour supply, stimulate local businesses and boost productivity, as well as support infrastructure development, attract investment and expand the pool of skilled workers.
- **Office Property Market Profile** The office market in Colchester accommodates approximately 264,691sqm of floorspace and comprises 57.4% of the total stock in the functional economic market area. The majority of premises are small (65% being less than 500sqm) though these account for only 22% of the total floorspace.
- The principal concentrations of offices in Colchester are in Colchester city centre, Colchester Business Park, Severalls Industrial Park, Peartree Business Centre and Tollgate Business Park.
- Analysis shows that the demand for office floorspace in Colchester is generally positive and vacancy rates suggest potential supply constraints within the local market.
- **Industrial Property Market Profile** The industrial market in Colchester provides 523,943sqm of industrial floorspace accounting for 36% of total floorspace across the functional economic market area. The largest concentrations of industrial properties are around Whitehall Industrial Estate, Severalls Industrial Estate and Gosbecks Business Park.
- The majority of floorspace is generated by storage and distribution uses (68.5% of floorspace across 146 properties); followed by general industrial (21.1% of floorspace across 148 properties); and light industrial (10.3% of floorspace across 53 properties). This reflects the size profile of the use classes, with storage and distribution properties tending to be over 1,000sqm in size, whereas the majority of general industrial and light industrial properties are less than 500sqm.
- The analysis highlights limited spare capacity within the light industrial use classes.
- **Key Sectors** There are a number of key sectors in Colchester which are likely to influence demand for employment space in Colchester over the Local Plan period. Core and growth sectors include Construction, Advanced Manufacturing, Transport and Logistics, Digital and Creative, Green Economy and Financial Services. These sectors have differing requirements from their sites and premises. For instance, sectors such as Transport and Logistics prioritise factors such as access to the strategic road network, proximity to markets, suitably proportioned sites and

potential for unimpeded 24-hour working, whereas service-oriented sectors such as financial services prioritise access to skilled labour and sufficient quality office space to attract staff and meet other environmental requirements. They also have differing implications both for land requirements and for job types and numbers.

- **Current Employment Land Supply** A total of 34 existing employment areas were identified and they form the basis of the supply assessment. Overall, the assessment of employment areas indicates that Colchester contains a reasonable range of employment of differing quality and type. Most of the sites accommodate a combination of both office and industrial uses. It is recognised that there are significantly more areas throughout the Colchester area which provide for employment which may not specifically be designated as 'employment areas' or were outside of this assessment. The Local Plan Policies are relevant to any site or premises which are currently used for employment.
- The assessment of existing employment areas highlights that the larger and higher performing employment areas tend to be located in proximity to the urban area, or with direct or indirect access to the primary road network, notably the A12. Employment areas less well connected to the road network were typified as being smaller, offering older/poorer quality buildings, limited public realm and access to public transport and amenities. However, there were notable exceptions in Tey Brook Farm, Great Tey and Lodge Park Business Centre, contained within Langham Airfield.
- In relation to the sites received through the Call for Sites process, the analysis highlights that the vast majority are rural in nature and therefore typified by offering poorer access to services and access by public transport. However, some of the sites provide direct access or proximity to the primary road network, and demonstrate stronger marketability, notably land north and south of Dobbies Lane, Marks Tey. However, few of the sites score strongly across multiple domains given their rural/peripheral nature.
- **Future Demand** The study considered three different scenarios to determine the future employment land requirements in Colchester. The preferred scenario (Labour Supply Scenario) considers the potential population increase in Colchester associated with the additional homes forecast over the Local Plan period, and how much employment land would be necessary to broadly match forecast growth of the resident workforce. The approach seeks to maximise the opportunities for the economically active population underpinned by the most recent Census (2021) data. This scenario results in a projected (net) requirement for

92,484sqm office floorspace and a projected (net) requirement for 144,276sqm industrial floorspace. This would translate to a land requirement for office uses of at least 9.2ha and at least 32.5ha for industrial uses.

- **Comparison between Supply and Demand** The demand analysis forecasts increased demand for office and industrial floorspace within Colchester over the Local Plan period to 2041. Given the quantum of land available at designated sites, additional vacant sites and employment sites in the planning pipeline, this results in a position whereby demand exceeds supply, necessitating the allocation of at least 10.6ha of land through additional sites in Colchester up to 2041.

### **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)**

- 3.8 A [Colchester Preferred Options Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Report](#) was produced in February 2025. This identified a framework of 14 objectives against which the Local Plan is assessed.
- 3.9 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) identifies a significant positive effect in relation to the SA Objective 3: Economic Growth, of Policy ST6 and Policy E1 given the importance of safeguarding demonstrably viable employment locations for sustainable economic growth and employment provision over the plan period. Minor positive effects were recorded for policies E2 and E3. Allowing for rural economic growth and agricultural diversification will support access to jobs for residents in less developed areas.
- 3.10 The SA finds that safeguarding an appropriate level of employment land in areas that residents can easily access will help to reduce the need for long distance commuting, including to locations outside of Colchester. As such, a minor positive effect is recorded in relation to SA Objective 4: Transport, for policies E1, E2 and E3. While it is important for employment development to be provided in the less developed areas of Colchester, allowing for development in rural locations could see some increase in commuting to areas that are not well served by sustainable transport and therefore a combined minor negative effect is recorded in relation to SA Objective 4: Transport, for Policies E2 and E3.
- 3.11 The SA finds that the maintenance of local employment opportunities will be important to help support more rural communities in Colchester. As such, a minor positive effect is recorded for Policy E2 in relation to SA Objective 5: Community and Health and Wellbeing.
- 3.12 The SA finds that more rural locations in Colchester are likely to be more sensitive to changes of use and extension or expansions of existing employment provisions, considering their less developed and less disturbed nature. As such

there is potential for adverse impacts on the settings of heritage assets, ecology and landscape character through Policies E2 and E3.

## **4. Approach to the Local Plan**

- 4.1 To develop the preferred policy approach, the adopted Local Plan policies have been reviewed, and National Policy, national Planning Practice Guidance and the findings from the evidence base have been taken into account.
- 4.2 In line with National Planning Practice Guidance, a range of future employment growth scenarios were considered as part of the Employment Study (2025). The preferred demand scenario: the Labour Supply Scenario represents an approach which seeks to maximise the opportunities for the economically active population in Colchester, in line with the projected growth of the population (and the relative proportion of those who are economically active), underpinned by the most recent Census 2021 data. This is the most ambitious scenario and supports the growth agenda being driven by the Council and is aligned with emerging economic strategies and the wider North Essex geography.

### **Meeting employment land requirements**

- 4.3 The Employment Study (2025) recommends that to meet the future requirements for office and industrial floorspace in Colchester, the Council will need to make choices about which existing employment areas to protect, those that are no longer fit-for-purpose and to identify new sites for employment development to support growth in the resident population and to ensure access to opportunities.
- 4.4 The Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) has been used to assess sites submitted as part of the Call for Sites for new employment development. The potential suitable site options, in addition to existing employment allocations, were then subject to more detailed assessment as part of the Employment Study (2025). This is in line with national Planning Practice Guidance that requires Councils to identify a future supply of land which is suitable, available and achievable for economic development uses over the Local Plan period. The potential site options were also subject to testing against the Local Plan evidence base to ensure that they are in suitable locations in line with the emerging Spatial Strategy.
- 4.5 Strategic Policy ST6: Colchester's Employment Needs contains the strategic economic spatial strategy and establishes the proposed scale of growth required to meet the employment land needs set out in the evidence base and in line with NPPF requirements to support economic growth. Policy ST6 makes provision for the delivery of at least 41.7ha of employment land across Colchester to meet projected demand up to 2041. The distribution of employment land across Colchester reflects the spatial strategy and directs growth in line with the spatial options in the Preferred Options Local Plan.

- 4.6 Policy ST6 is supported by employment site allocation policies which seek to distribute and direct the delivery of the proposed new employment land. The approximate total amount of employment land allocated is above the 41.7ha required to meet demand. This reflects the need for flexibility in respect of the nature of employment delivered. The correlation between land area and job numbers is very variable and is far more difficult to quantify than the equivalent exercise for housing. For example, land used for a storage facility under use class B8 may have a significant land take but often will only need a small number of employees. Allocating land in excess of that required provides greater flexibility, ensuring the full range of employment demand and job needs can be met.
- 4.7 The employment site allocation policies provide further detail on specific employment allocations along with further information on infrastructure improvements and mitigation measures required to address the site opportunities and constraints at each location. The site allocations reflect the need for economic growth to be targeted at the most marketable, accessible and sustainable locations.
- 4.8 The Employment Study concluded that the projected demand for office floorspace up to 2041 is for an estimated net additional 92,484sqm of floorspace. The study finds that demand for office floorspace is generally characterised by smaller floorspace requirements. Key sectors likely to influence demand for office employment space over the local plan period include the digital, creative and tech and financial and business services sectors. Locational drivers for these businesses include quality, flexibility, ease of access, access to skilled labour and markets and flexibility to support reconfiguration for different activities.
- 4.9 The Employment Study concluded that the projected demand for industrial floorspace up to 2041 is for an estimated net additional 144,276 sqm of floorspace (under the preferred scenario). The Study finds that demand, for light and general industrial space, is for smaller units, and vacancy is generally very low for this space. General demand for larger industrial/storage and distribution units (>2,800 sqm) is low, and typically from existing firms looking to expand. Key sectors likely to drive demand for industrial space include advanced manufacturing, construction, transport and logistics and green energy. Considering locational requirements, transport connectivity is a key determinant of investment, with access to staff, customers and the supply chain key considerations for businesses across production sectors. Other locational requirements include the potential for unimpeded 24-hour working and the quality and availability of supporting infrastructure (e.g. digital connectivity and power).
- 4.10 Ensuring flexibility is maintained on the employment sites over the plan period is important. The Employment Study identifies the potential suitability for specific uses on some of the allocated sites as detailed in paragraph 4.12 below. It is

anticipated that following consultation and feedback from wider stakeholders' further details could be incorporated in the Submission Draft Plan where appropriate.

- 4.11 Policy ST6 and the associated site allocation policies do not specifically allocate land for office or industrial use. The Policy defines suitable employment uses as Use Classes E(g), B2 and B8. However, it is acknowledged that certain use classes require different locational requirements. It is anticipated that following consultation and input from wider stakeholders a more specific breakdown and specification of site-specific policy expectations detailing the use classes that each site may be most suited to can be incorporated where appropriate and justified.
- 4.12 In line with the recommendations from the Employment Study, the Council aims to follow a balanced approach to supporting and encouraging employment activities of all business sizes, recognising that demand will vary by type of space and will therefore be geographically varied.
- 4.13 Employment site allocations in the Preferred Options Plan include site allocations carried forward from the adopted Local Plan and new employment sites as follows:

The carried forward site allocations are:

- **Land north of Axial Way, Northern Gateway, Colchester** An allocated employment site in the adopted Colchester Local Plan (part of North Colchester Strategic Economic Area) with a 1.7ha plot of vacant land to the north of Axial Way and to the west of Easter Park. The vacant site has been carried forward in the Preferred Options Colchester Local Plan. The Employment Study (2025) notes that Axial Way and Severalls Industrial Estate is suited to a variety of sectors including construction and advanced manufacturing as well as opportunity to accommodate clean energy and health care uses.
- **Colchester Business Park** An allocated employment site in the Colchester Local Plan (part of North Colchester Strategic Economic Area) with a 1.1ha plot of vacant development land within the Business Park, with access to Colchester to the south and the A12 to the north. The vacant site has been carried forward in the Preferred Options Colchester Local Plan. The Employment Study (2025) notes that Colchester Business Park is well suited for creative/tech/digital sectors, financial services, and potentially health and care from a non-manufacturing perspective.
- **Knowledge Gateway** An allocated employment site in the adopted Colchester Local Plan (part of Knowledge Gateway Strategic Economic Area) with an estimated 4.5ha vacant land contained between Capon

Road and Boundary Road, and to the north of Nesfield Road adjacent to the Knowledge Gateway Business Park. The vacant site has been carried forward in the Preferred Options Colchester Local Plan. The Employment Study (2025) notes that Knowledge Gateway is a high-quality environment with reasonable access and is likely to meet needs of Colchester's growth sectors including creative/digital/tech, financial services, health and care, as well as services related to advanced manufacturing/clean energy.

- **Land South of Tollgate West** An allocated site in the adopted Colchester Local Plan (part of Stanway Strategic Economic Area) with an estimated 3.7ha of vacant land. The Employment Study (2025) notes that the Stanway Strategic Economic Area is suited to a variety of sectors including construction and advanced manufacturing, while office uses could support financial services. This wider site (land to north and south of Tollgate West, Stanway) has outline planning permission (211610) for a mixed-use development. Part of the site, to the south of Tollgate West, has full planning permission for the erection of new buildings (approx. 9.345sqm gross employment floorspace) to accommodate flexible Use Classes E, B2, B8.
- **Maldon Road, Colchester** An allocated site in the adopted Colchester Local Plan which contains 0.8ha of vacant employment land to the west of Colchester Recycling Centre. The Maldon Road employment area includes general industrial estate; storage and distribution; recycling/waste/environmental uses. The vacant site has been carried forward in the Preferred Options Colchester Local Plan. The Employment Study (2025) notes that the site characteristics suggest the potential to accommodate advanced manufacturing and construction uses, potentially lower value businesses, in light of the condition and age of stock and presence of the recycling plant on site. The Employment Study (2025) also identified the wider Maldon Road site as a site that presents an intensification opportunity, subject to viability, with underutilised land to the rear of the units on the road frontage of the site.
- **Anderson's Site, Marks Tey** An allocated site in the adopted Colchester Local Plan. The Anderson's employment area is an industrial site, characterised in the Employment Study (2025) as a large high quality industrial site, that is fit-for-purpose with access to the A12, wide internal roads and space suitable for HGVs. The Employment Study (2025) notes that the Anderson's Site offers the potential to attract growth sectors including creative/digital/tech industries, and financial services, despite some constraints. The site has planning permission for commercial, business and service (Class E(c)(g)) general industrial (Class B2) and storage and distribution (Class B8) purposes.

- **Highlands Nursery, Tiptree** A 1.1ha allocated employment site in the Tiptree Neighbourhood Plan which is part of a mixed-use development. The preferred location for the employment area is in the south of the site, adjacent to Kelvedon Road. The Employment Study notes that the allocation may offer potential to accommodate small-scale advanced manufacturing and construction uses once developed.
- **Land south of Factory Hill, Tiptree** An allocated site in the adopted Colchester Local Plan, which contains approximately 4ha of vacant employment land.
- **Lodge Lane, Langham** Site adjacent to Lodge Business Park which the Employment Study notes offers recently developed office space with high quality public realm. The site has outline planning consent for up to 3,000sqm of office floorspace and the site has been carried forward in the Preferred Options Colchester Local Plan and is safeguarded for employment uses.

Proposed new site allocations are:

- **Land south of A12, Marks Tey** The Employment Study suggests that the site is one of the most suitable means of addressing the lack of supply over the Local Plan period to meet demand and that the site is potentially well suited for industrial uses. The site is well located in relation to proposed residential allocation with potential to enhance connectivity between the two sites. The Employment Study notes that the site currently offers limited connectivity via the station/bus stops by active modes. Policy PEP5 includes requirement to include active travel links that maximise opportunities for enhanced connectivity to the surrounding area and to maximise the use of sustainable transport.
- **Bullbanks Farm, Eight Ash Green** Site with connectivity to the A1124. The Employment Study suggests that the site offers potential suitability for industrial uses due to there being no sensitive uses in proximity to the site.
- **Land at Pattens Yard, West Bergholt** Site would be additional to existing employment uses at Pattens Yard (currently including landscape gardening, beauty salon, clothing company and property maintenance).
- **Land at Wakes Hall Business Centre, Wakes Colne** Site adjacent to existing Wakes Hall Business Centre which the Employment Study notes offers a high-quality environment potentially suited to small-scale E(g)(i) and E(g)(iii) uses.

Feedback from the consultation in respect of these sites will help inform more detailed policy requirements in the Submission Draft Local Plan.

- 4.14 Additionally, some strategic residential allocations will be supported by employment provision within them to allow people to live and work in the same area, thus supporting the delivery of sustainable developments.
- 4.15 It is also anticipated that development land will come forward in the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community over the Local Plan period. In line with the adopted Local Plan, and site specific DPD it is anticipated that a further 3.5ha of this employment land will come forward in the Plan period and contribute to the supply for Colchester.
- 4.16 The carried forward employment site allocations, proposed new employment site allocations and proposed new residential/mixed use allocations can be seen on the map in Appendix B: Preferred Options Employment and Residential Allocations.

#### **Safeguarding Employment Land**

- 4.17 The Employment Study (2025) recommended that existing fit for purpose sites are protected for employment use to ensure that there is a ready supply of premises across Colchester. However, it noted that while it is important to protect employment land, there is also strong evidence of competition for the space from other non-employment uses, such as housing and, in some locations, other uses such as retail or food outlets. Therefore, a flexible approach is required that considers the merits of each individual site, and which use it is best suited for.
- 4.18 Policy E1: Protection of Employment aims to safeguard land and premises currently in employment use, where appropriate, to provide, protect and enhance employment provision in a range of locations across the Colchester area to enable balanced job and housing growth. In light of the changes to the Use Class Order and the added flexibility within the E Use Class, the policy seeks to manage this where appropriate to ensure this does not lead to unintended impacts on the integrity of employment areas or start to erode their primary function. For uses within E Class other than E(g) policy tests are provided to ensure this is managed effectively. To ensure that a flexible approach is applied that considers the merits of each individual site, a set of criteria is included in the policy that will be used to assess planning applications for the redevelopment of change of use for non-Class B or Class E(g) uses.
- 4.19 Policy E1 applies to all land in employment use, and therefore, includes all existing employment sites even if they have not been specifically shown/allocated on the Policies Maps. This enables the selective protection of

employment land and premises as recommended by the Employment Study and allows case by case consideration of proposals on their merits.

- 4.20 The Employment Study recommended that the Council should monitor changes of employment land through planning permissions to ensure that sufficient land is available for economic growth over the plan period to 2041. This includes ensuring that the introduction of Class E does not have an outsized impact on the integrity of employment areas through facilitating the introduction of non-employment uses. The amount and type of employment land delivered during the Local Plan period will be monitored and managed as set out in Policy ST6. The Local Plan Monitoring Chapter could include indicators to monitor employment permissions to support a prosperous and sustainable local economy.

### **Enhancing and Renewing Employment Buildings**

- 4.21 The Employment Study (2025) found that high quality (Grade A) office space is in demand, with energy efficiency increasingly important given rising awareness of running costs. Policy E1: Protection of Employment aims to enable opportunities to enhance and renew more dated buildings within employment areas, in accordance with other relevant policies in the plan. In addition, Policy NZ1 requires all new buildings to be designed and built to be Net Zero Carbon in operation.

### **Rural Employment and Agricultural Development and Diversification**

- 4.22 The Employment Study (2025) recommended that the Council consider supporting flexibility in the rural economy to respond to opportunities to re-use or adapt land and buildings no longer in productive agricultural use. National Policy requires that planning policies support the rural economy by enabling sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural area.
- 4.23 In line with these requirements and recommendations, Policy E2: Economic Development in Rural Areas and the Countryside aims to safeguard and promote employment in rural Colchester, ensuring its role in supporting the local economy and providing job opportunities for residents. Policy E3: Agricultural Development and Diversification aims to support and encourage appropriate farm diversification proposals where they help support the rural economy, are compatible with the rural environment and help to sustain the existing agricultural enterprise without the need for subdivision of the holding or separate enterprise unrelated to the existing agricultural use.

## Appendix A: Use Classes Order and Permitted Development Rights

Use Classes Order: Comparison with use classes prior to 1 September 2020

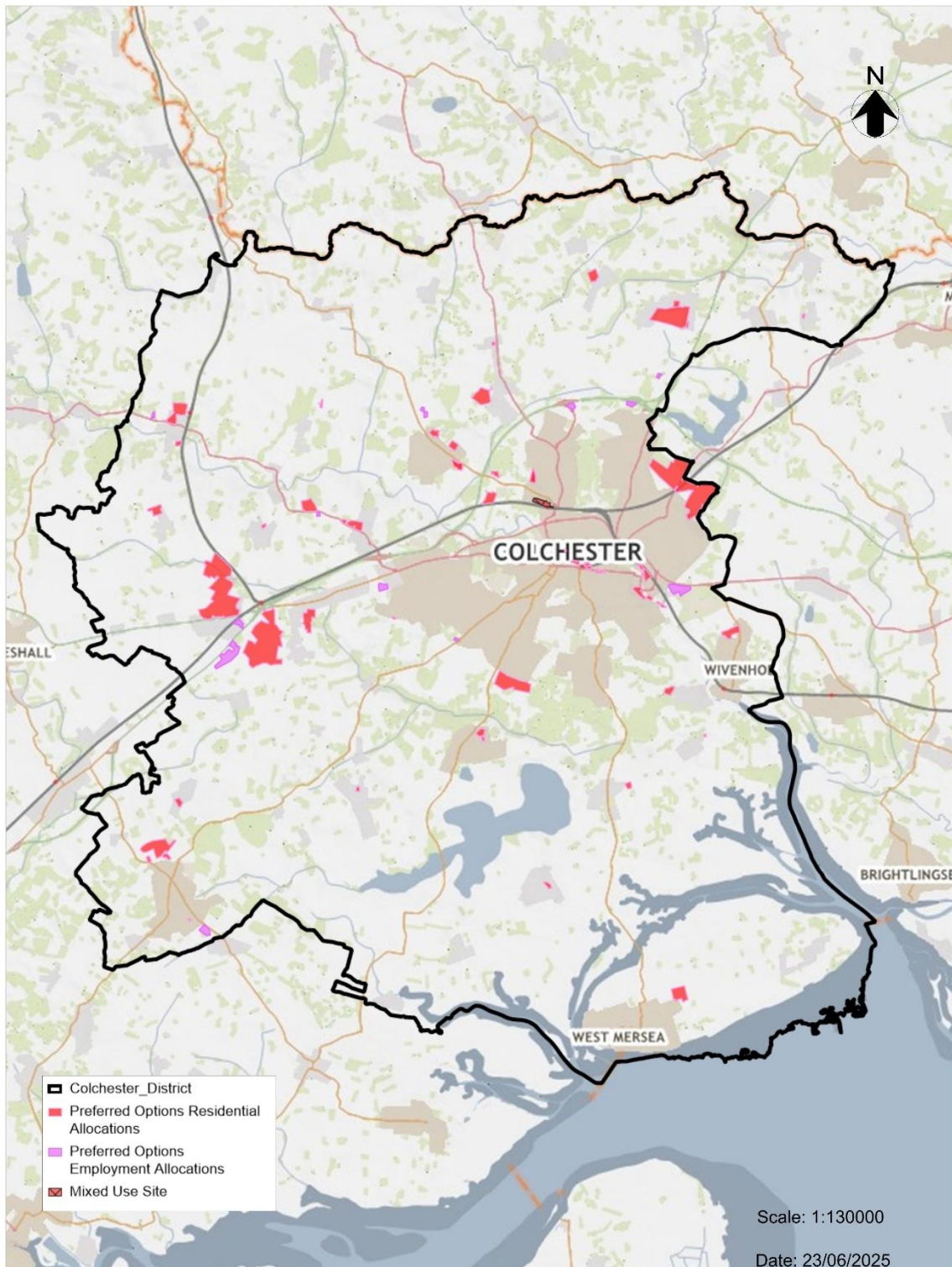
Use	Use Class up to August 2020	Use Class from 1 September 2020
Shop not more than 280sqm mostly selling essential goods, including food and at least 1km from another similar shop	A1	F.2
Shop	A1	E
Financial and professional services (not medical)	A2	E
Café or restaurant	A3	E
Pub or drinking establishment	A4	Sui generis
Take away	A5	Sui generis
Office other than a use within Class A2	B1a	E
Research and development of products or processes	B1b	E
For any industrial process (which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area)	B1c	E
Industrial	B2	B2
Storage or distribution	B8	B8

Extract from the updated Permitted Development Rights as far as they relate to economic uses

Current Use Class Order from 1 September 2020	Permitted change to development (permanent)
<p>Class E</p> <p>Commercial, Business and Service Use, or part use, for all or any of the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Shop other than for the sale of hot food</li> <li>b) Food and drink which is mostly consumed on the premises</li> <li>c) services principally to visiting members of the Public including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. financial services</li> <li>ii. professional services (other than medical services)</li> <li>iii. any other services which it is appropriate to provide in a commercial, business or service locality</li> </ul> </li> <li>d) Indoor sport and recreation (not swimming pools, ice rinks or motorised vehicles or firearms)</li> <li>e) Medical services not attached to the residence of the practitioner</li> <li>f) Non-residential creche, day centre or nursery</li> <li>g) Business and research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) office</li> <li>ii) the research and development of products or processes</li> <li>or iii) any industrial process, (which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>To C3 (Dwelling Houses), subject to prior approval (PD Class MA)</p> <p>To a mixed use for any purpose within Class E and as up to 2 flats, subject to prior approval (PD Class G)</p> <p>To a mixed use for any purpose within Class E and as up to 2 flats to a use for any purpose Class E (PD Class H)</p> <p>To a state-funded school falling within Class F.1 (Learning and non-residential institutions) (a) (PD Class T) (and back to previous lawful use (PD Class U)</p>

Former Use Class Order prior to 1 September 2020	Permitted change to development (permanent)
Class B2 General industry Industrial process other than one falling within the uses described in Class E, subparagraph (g)	To B8 (PD Class I)
Class B8 Storage and distribution	To C3 (dwelling houses), subject to prior approval (PD Class P)

## Appendix B: Preferred Options Employment and Residential Allocations



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