

Colchester City Council

Retail Study: Local Centres

October 2025



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Consumer demands and trends in relation to retail have changed within the last few years, impacting the shopping patterns within town centres and other retail environments.
- 1.2 For planning purposes, and as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), references to 'town centres' or 'centres' apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Unless they are identified as centres in the development plan, existing out-of-centre developments, comprising or including main town centre uses¹, do not constitute town centres.
- 1.3 A Retail, Leisure and Town Centre Study was commissioned in 2024 to support the new Local Plan preparation. This study included a review of trends in the retail and leisure sectors alongside conducting 'health check reviews' to determine how the town and district centres areas were faring economically.

2. Centre Hierarchy

- 2.1 Colchester's existing network and hierarchy of centres is set out in Policy SG5 of the adopted Colchester Local Plan. The focus of the Retail, Leisure and Town Centre Study was on Colchester's main centres, comprising the City Centre and District Centres, defined under Policy SG5 of the adopted Colchester Local Plan as follows:

- Town Centre
 - Colchester City Centre
- District Centres
 - Tiptree
 - West Mersea
 - Wivenhoe
 - Tollgate
 - Peartree Road
 - Turner Rise
 - Highwoods

¹ These uses are defined as Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities)

- 2.2 Beyond these main centres, and the scope of the Retail, Leisure and Town Centre Study, Colchester's network of centres includes several Local Centres. Policy SG5 defines **Local Centres** as having an '*essential role providing a range of small shops and services to meet the basic needs of local communities, serving a small catchment.*'
- 2.3 The Colchester Retail, Leisure and Town Centre Study did not consider Colchester's Local Centres in any detail as this was beyond the scope of that study. However, it did provide some recommendation on Local Centres within Colchester. This report provides information on how Local Centres identified in the adopted Local Plan, and the recommendations of the Retail, Leisure and Town Centre Study, have been considered in the Preferred Options Plan.

3. Colchester's Local Centres

3.1 The Retail, Leisure and Town Centre Study comments that Local Centres provide a series of small shops and services specifically to meet the needs of local neighbourhoods. In the adopted Colchester Local Plan, it is noted that Local Centres are categorised as containing at least one food store or convenience store and a small range of other shops/services/community facilities of local importance. While smaller retail areas and neighbourhood parades fulfil an important role for local communities, they do not form part of the centre's hierarchy.

3.2 The Local Centres identified in the adopted Local Plan are:

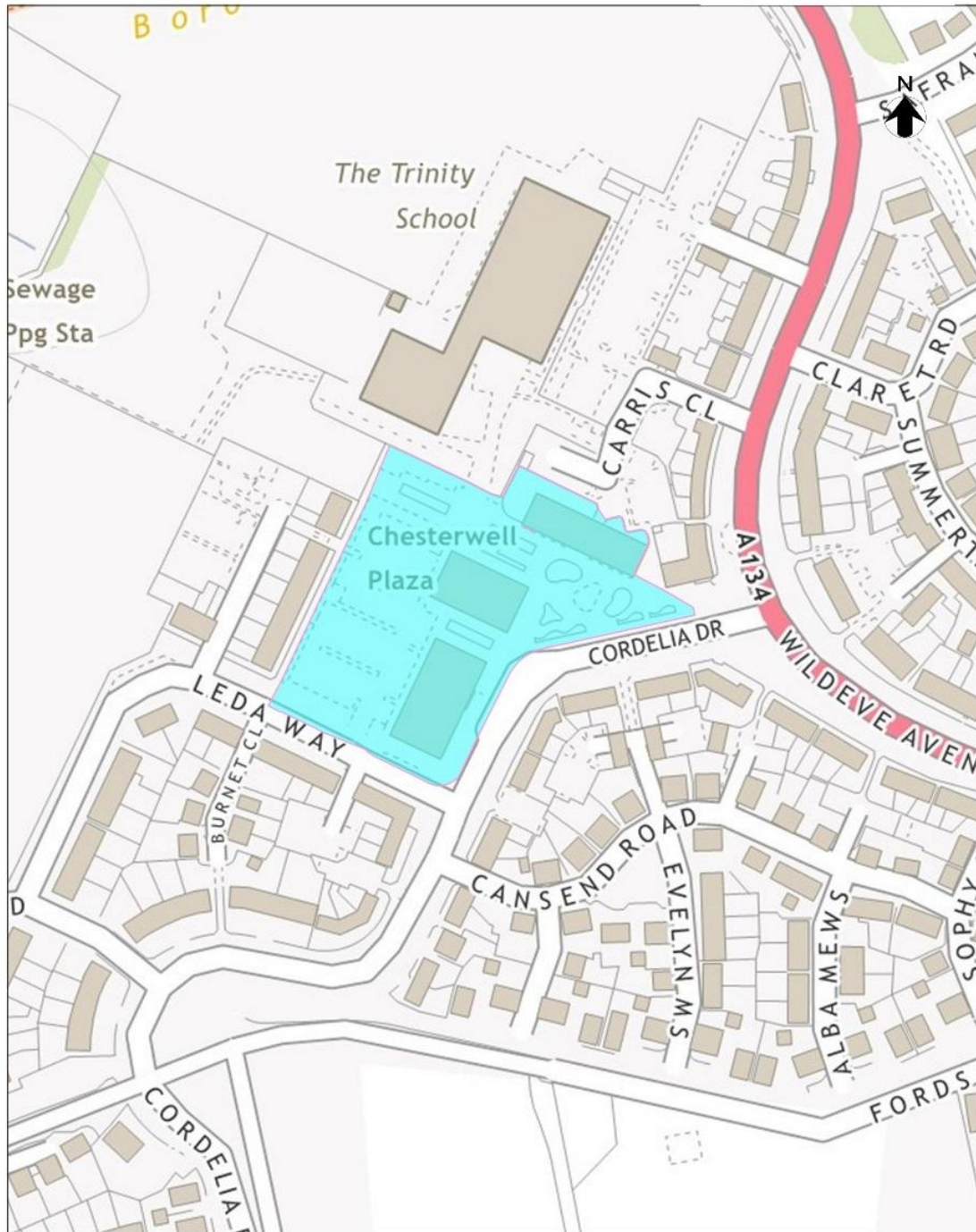
- St Christopher Road, St Johns
- Hawthorne Avenue, Greenstead
- Icen Way, Shrub End
- William Harris Way, Garrison
- Homefield Road, Garrison
- Monkwick and Mersea Road
- The Willows
- Old Heath Road
- Hythe Quay
- London Road, Stanway
- Villa Road, Stanway
- Blackberry Road, Stanway
- The Commons, Prettygate
- Dedham
- London Road, Marks Tey
- Vine Road, Wivenhoe

3.3 The Colchester Retail, Leisure and Town Centre Study (2024) reviewed Colchester's existing hierarchy of centres in accordance with advice set out in the NPPF and PPG. Peartree Road is defined as a District Centre in the adopted Local Plan. Based on the updated evidence base, it suggested that it is appropriate to define Peartree Road as a Local Centre. The evidence shows that the centre secures a relatively low catchment area market share of convenience goods expenditure (attributed to the Co-op convenience store); while the comparison goods market share can largely be attributed to the existing trade warehouses and depots to the east and south of the main centre (i.e. Stanway Retail Park) which the report also suggests, are excluded from the primary shopping area.

- 3.4 Although the Colchester Retail Study (2024) did not consider Colchester's Local Centres in detail, the report stated that the Council may wish to consider whether it is appropriate to designate the small-scale retail and service uses in North Colchester, as Local Centres given their role serving basic local needs.
- 3.5 The study also stated that there may be other areas, outside the scope of the study, comprising small-scale retail and other main town centre uses which the Council considers should be defined as Local Centres. Monkwick and Mersea Road were shown as one Local Centre in the adopted Local Plan. It is proposed that these are separated out into two Local Centres in the Preferred Options Local Plan, titled Mersea Road and Queen Elizabeth Way.
- 3.6 Based on the evidence base, primarily contained in the Retail, Leisure and Town Centre Study, the following Local Centres are defined on the Colchester Preferred Options Local Plan Policies Maps.
- Chesterwell Plaza, Leda Way
 - St Christopher Road, St Johns
 - Hawthorne Avenue, Greenstead
 - Icen Way, Shrub End
 - William Harris Way, Colchester
 - Homefield Road, Garrison
 - Queen Elizabeth Way, Colchester
 - Mersea Road, Colchester
 - The Willows, Colchester
 - Old Heath Road, Colchester
 - Hythe Quay, Colchester
 - London Road, Stanway
 - Villa Road, Stanway
 - Peartree Road, Colchester
 - Blackberry Road, Stanway
 - The Commons, Prettygate
 - High Street, Dedham
 - London Road, Marks Tey
 - Vine Drive, Wivenhoe
- 3.7 The Appendix to the report contains location maps and boundaries of all of the Local Centres listed above.

Appendix 1: Maps of Local Centres

Chesterwell Plaza, Leda Way, Colchester

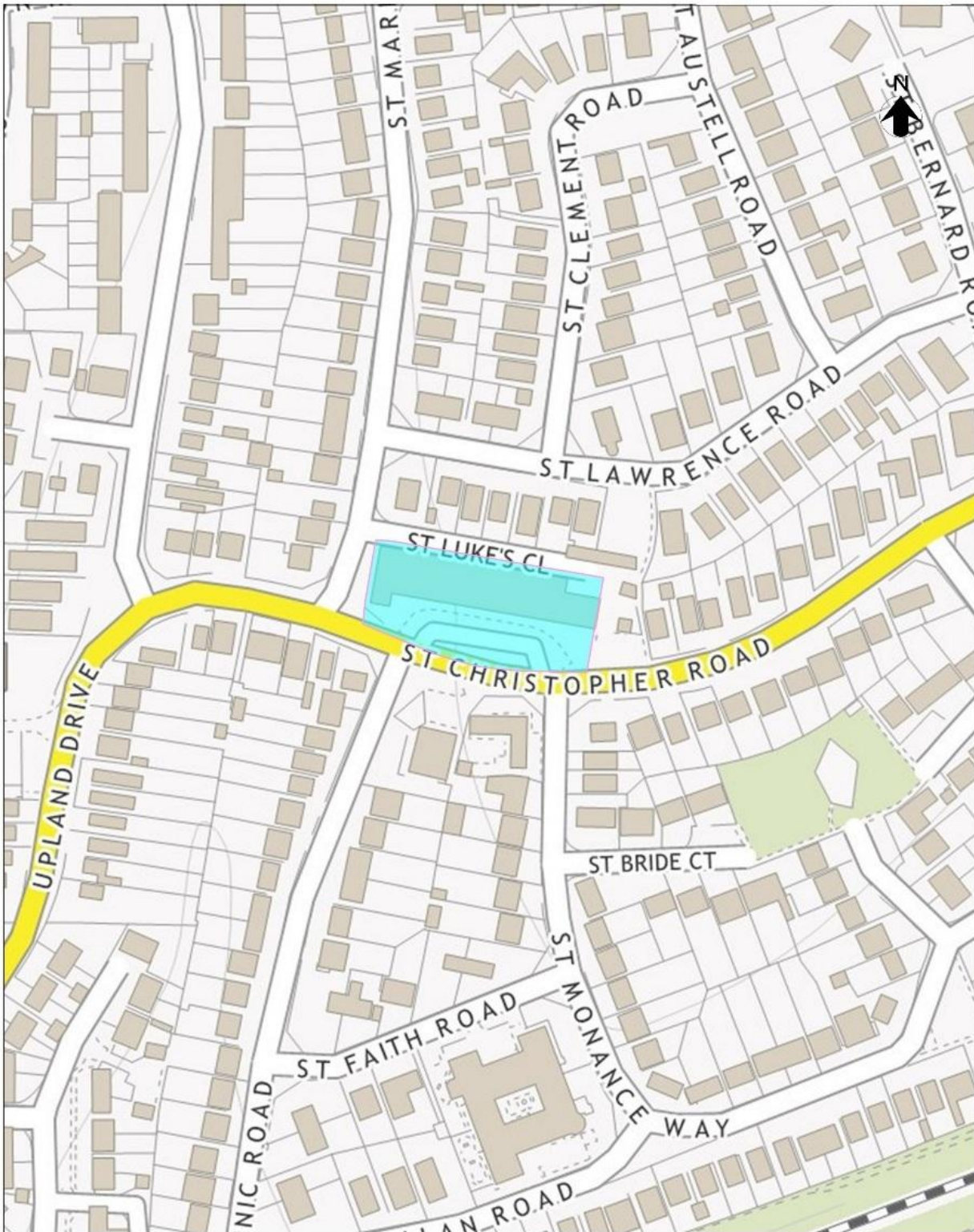


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This is a new Local Centre for the Preferred Options Local Plan

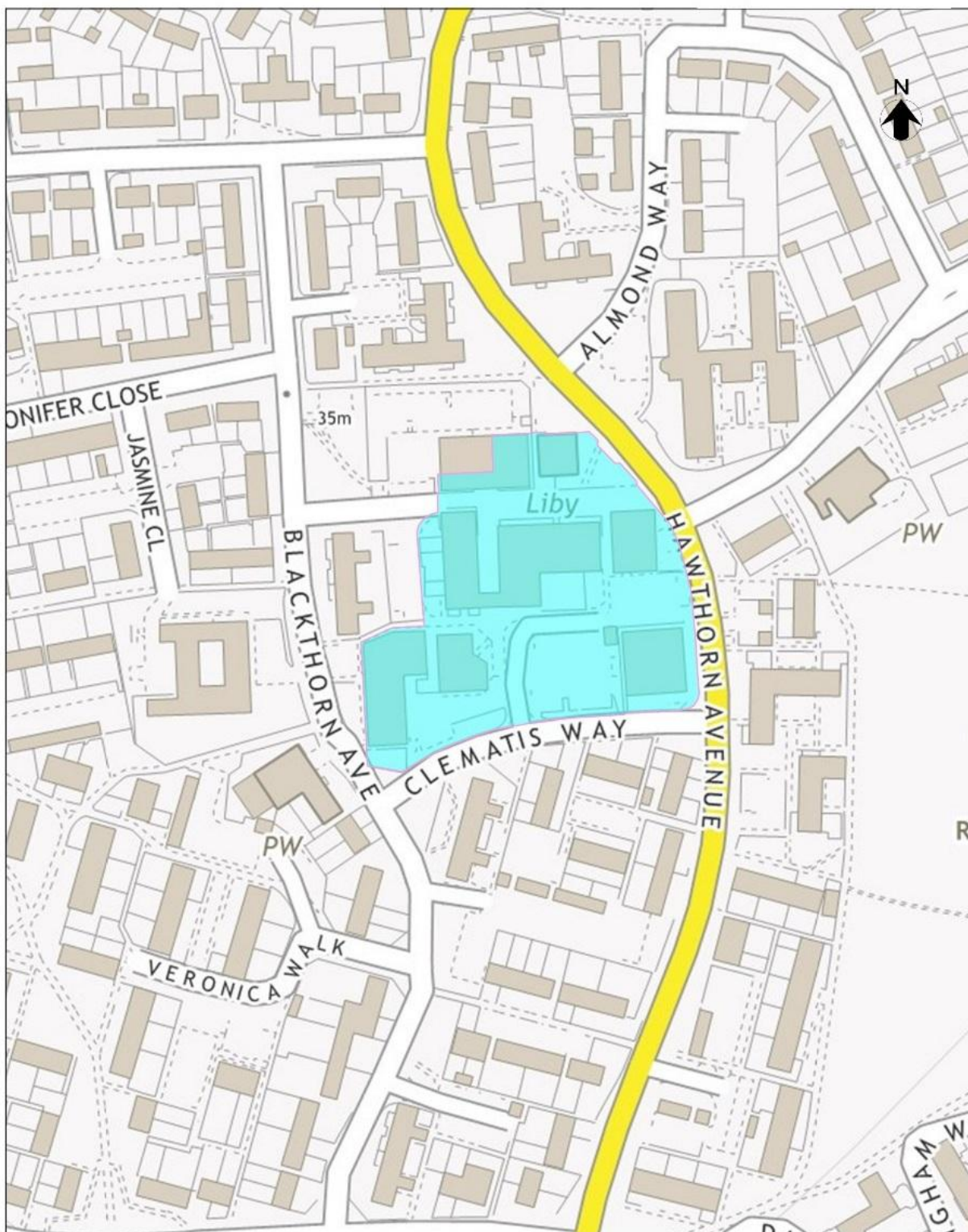
Saint Christopher Road, St Johns



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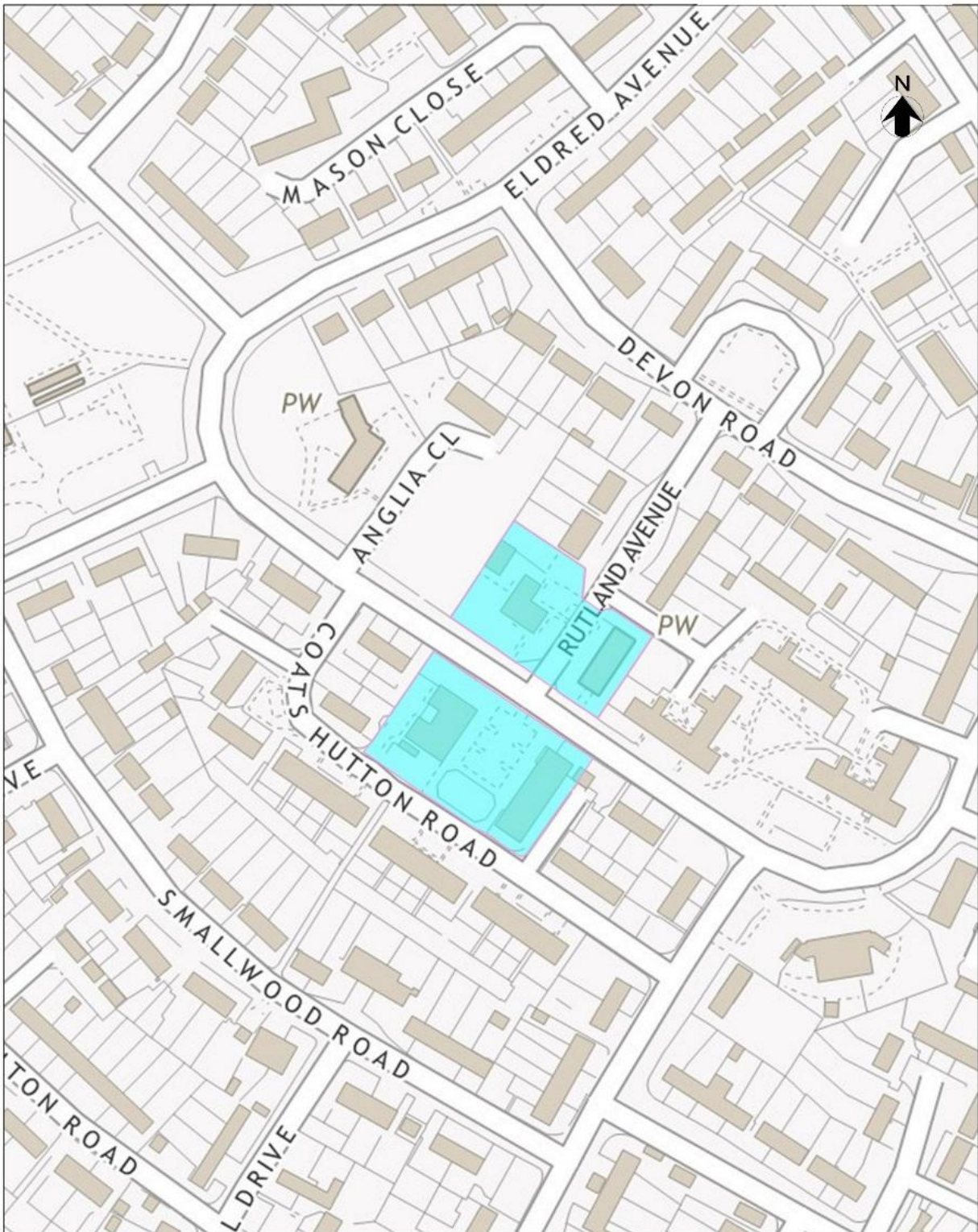
Hawthorn Avenue, Greenstead



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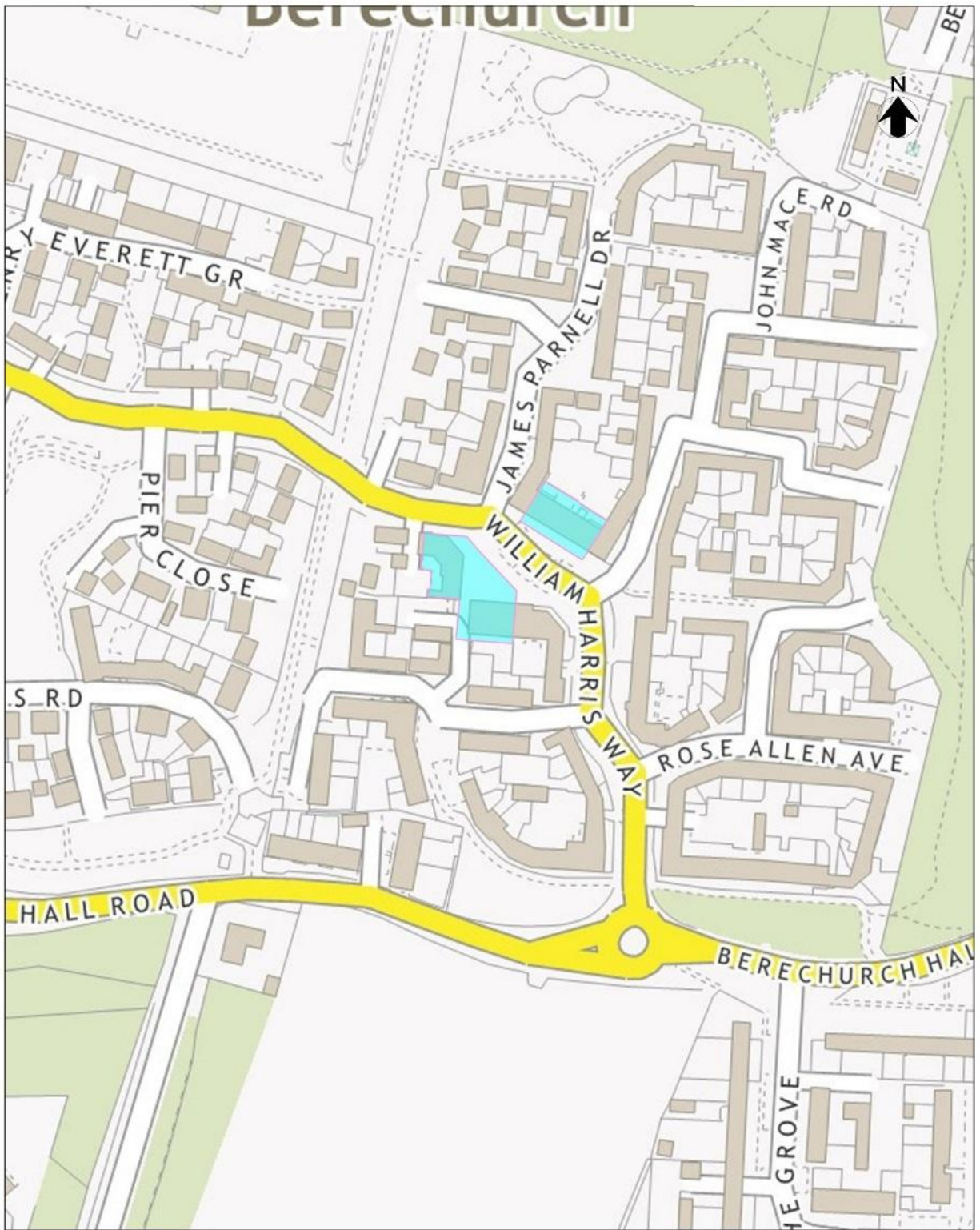
Iceni Way, Shrub End



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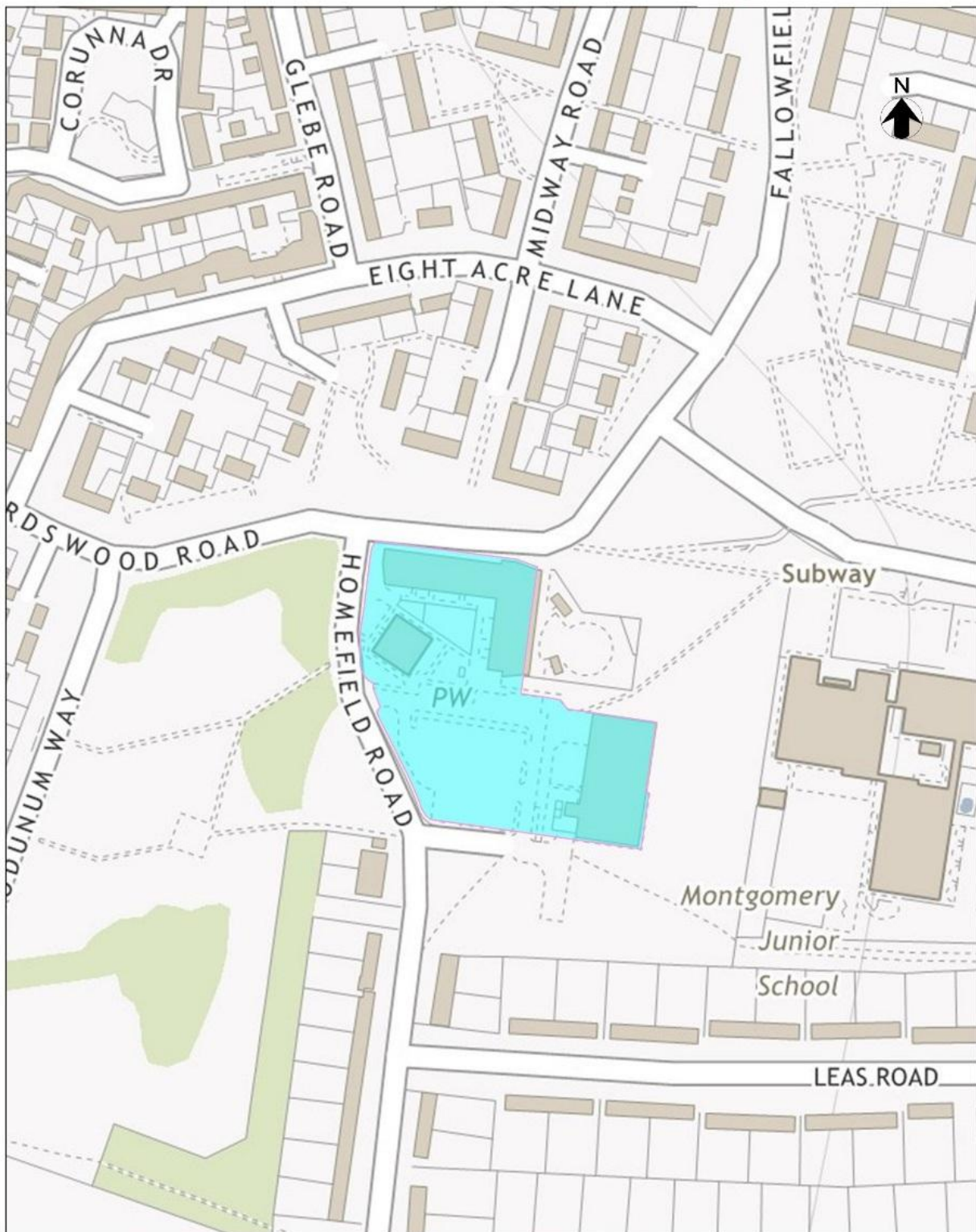
William Harris Way, Colchester



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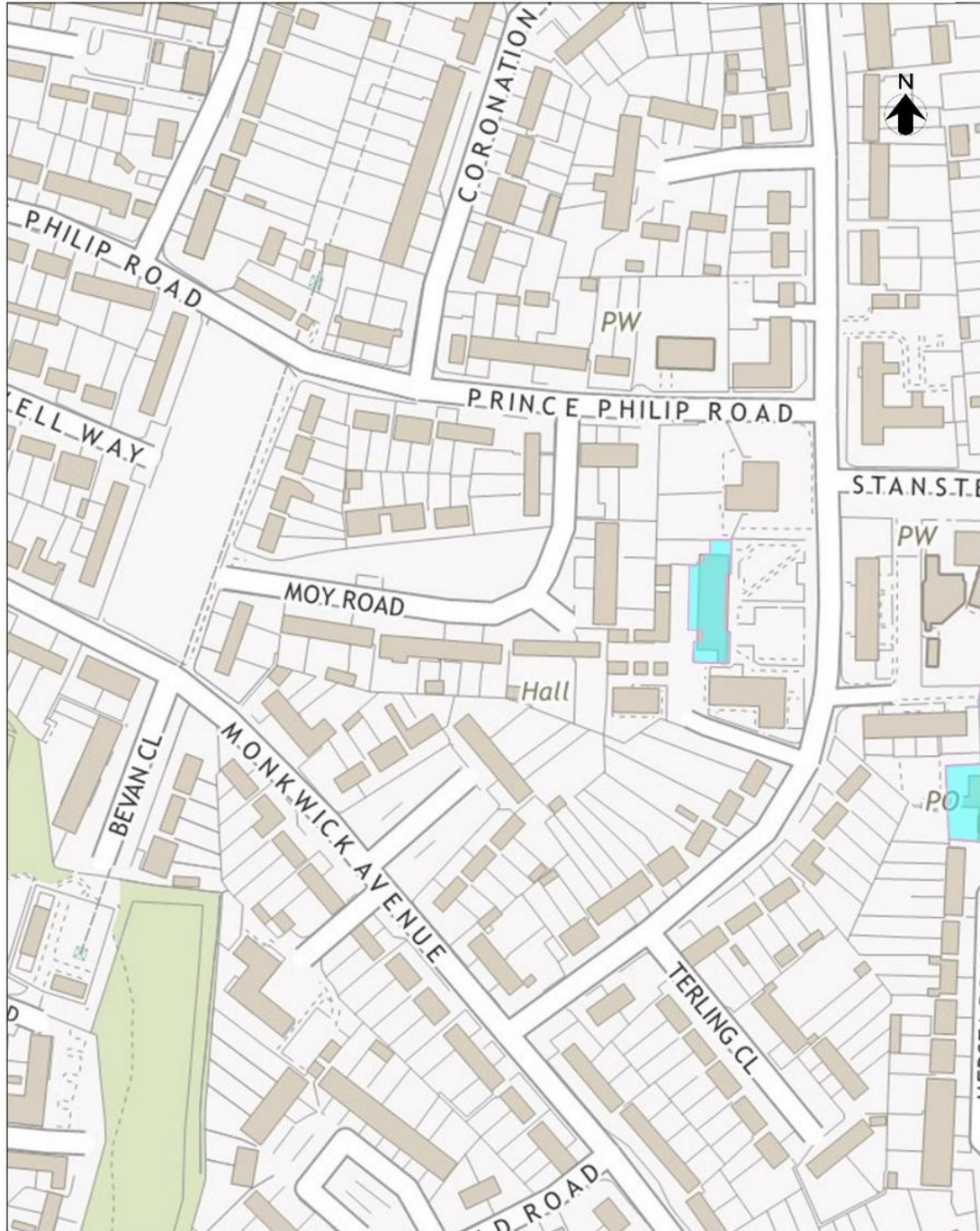
Homefield Road, Garrison



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Queen Elizabeth Way, Colchester

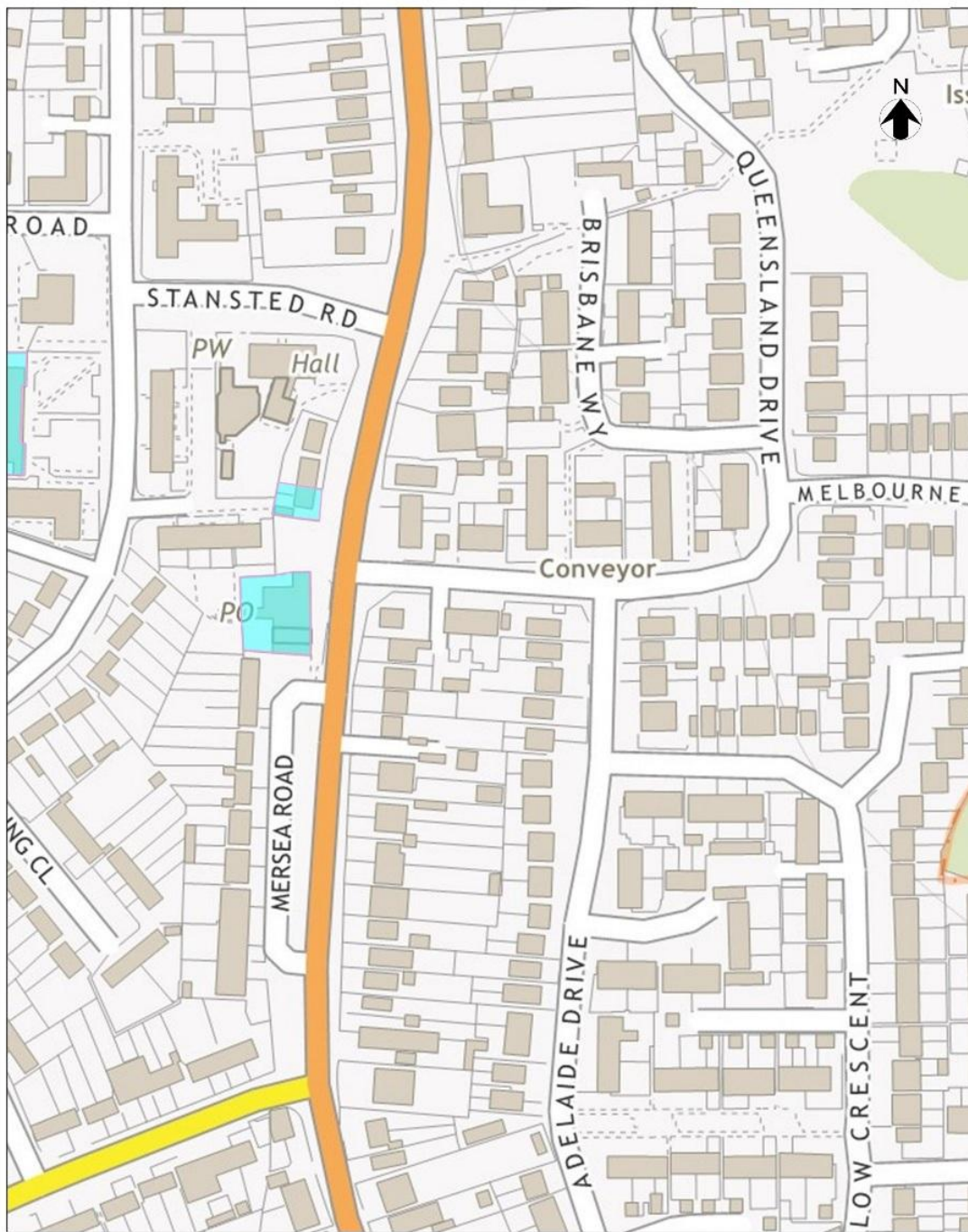


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In the Adopted Local Plan Monkwick and Mersea Road sites were combined. It is proposed that this is separated out into two local centres in the Preferred Options Local Plan. This would change the name to one labelled Mersea Road and the other as Queen Elizabeth Way.

Mersea Road, Colchester



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In the Adopted Local Plan Monkwick and Mersea Road sites were combined. It is proposed that this is separated out into two local centres in the Preferred Options Local Plan. This would change the name to one labelled Mersea Road and the other as Queen Elizabeth Way.

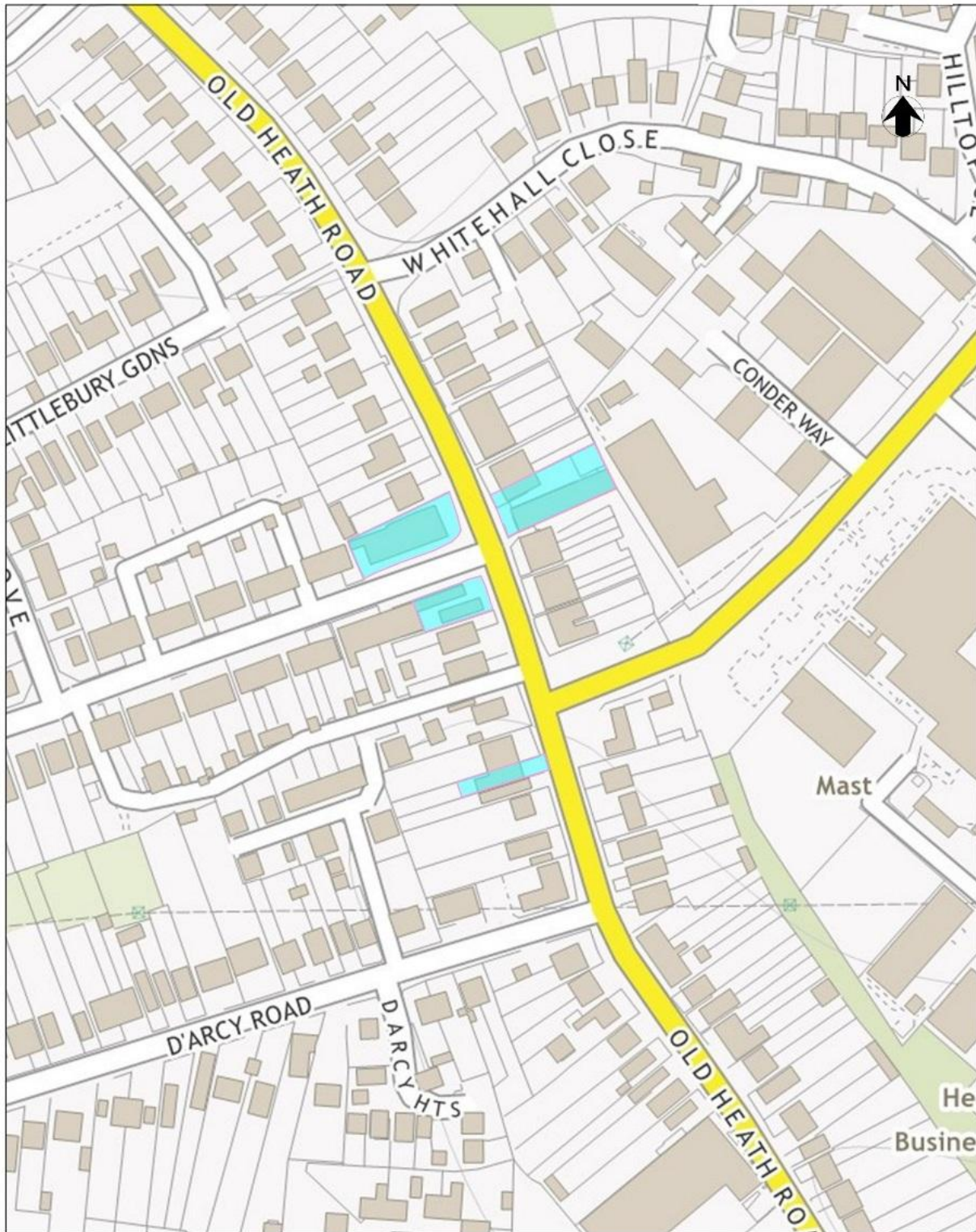
The Willows, Colchester



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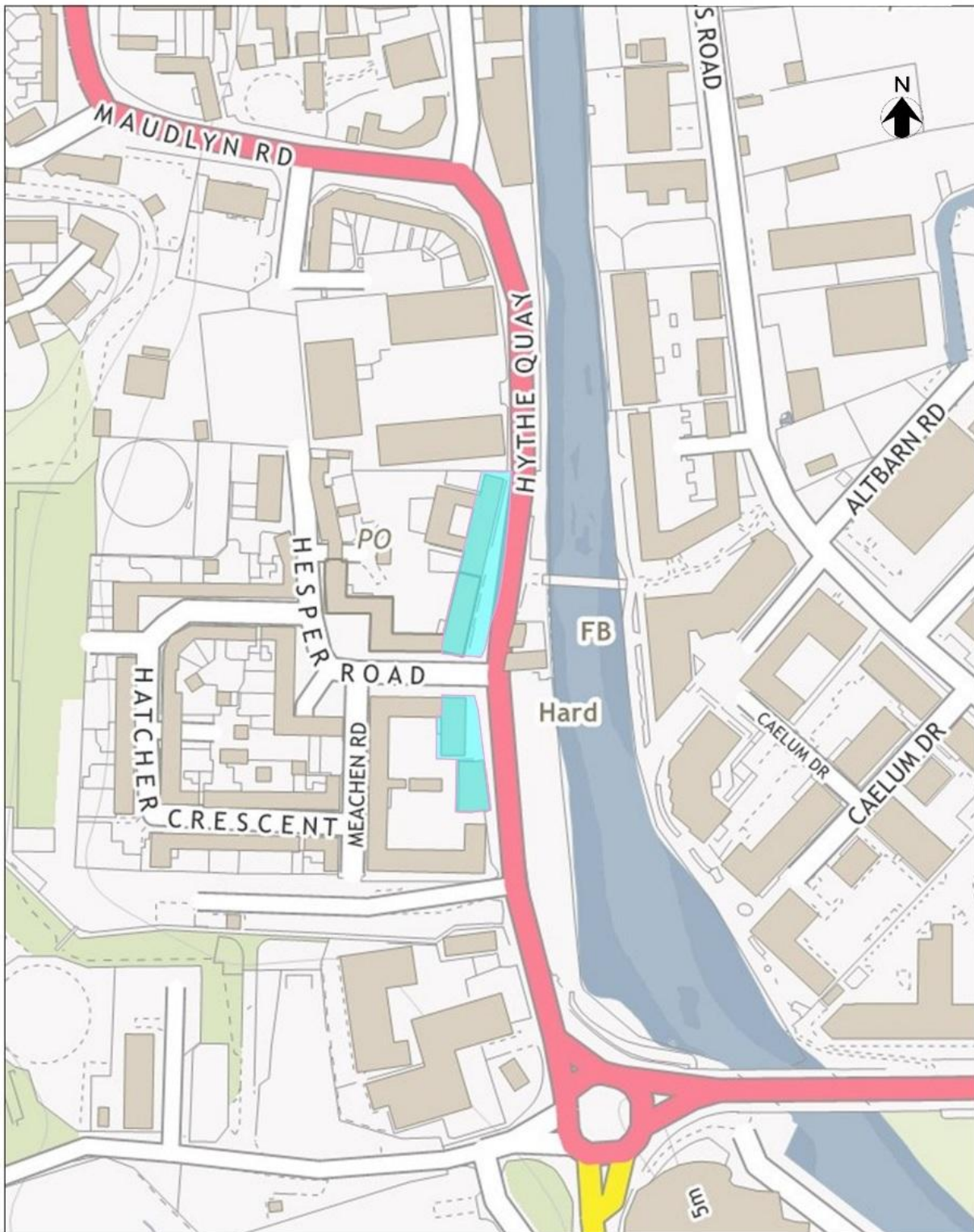
Old Heath Road, Colchester



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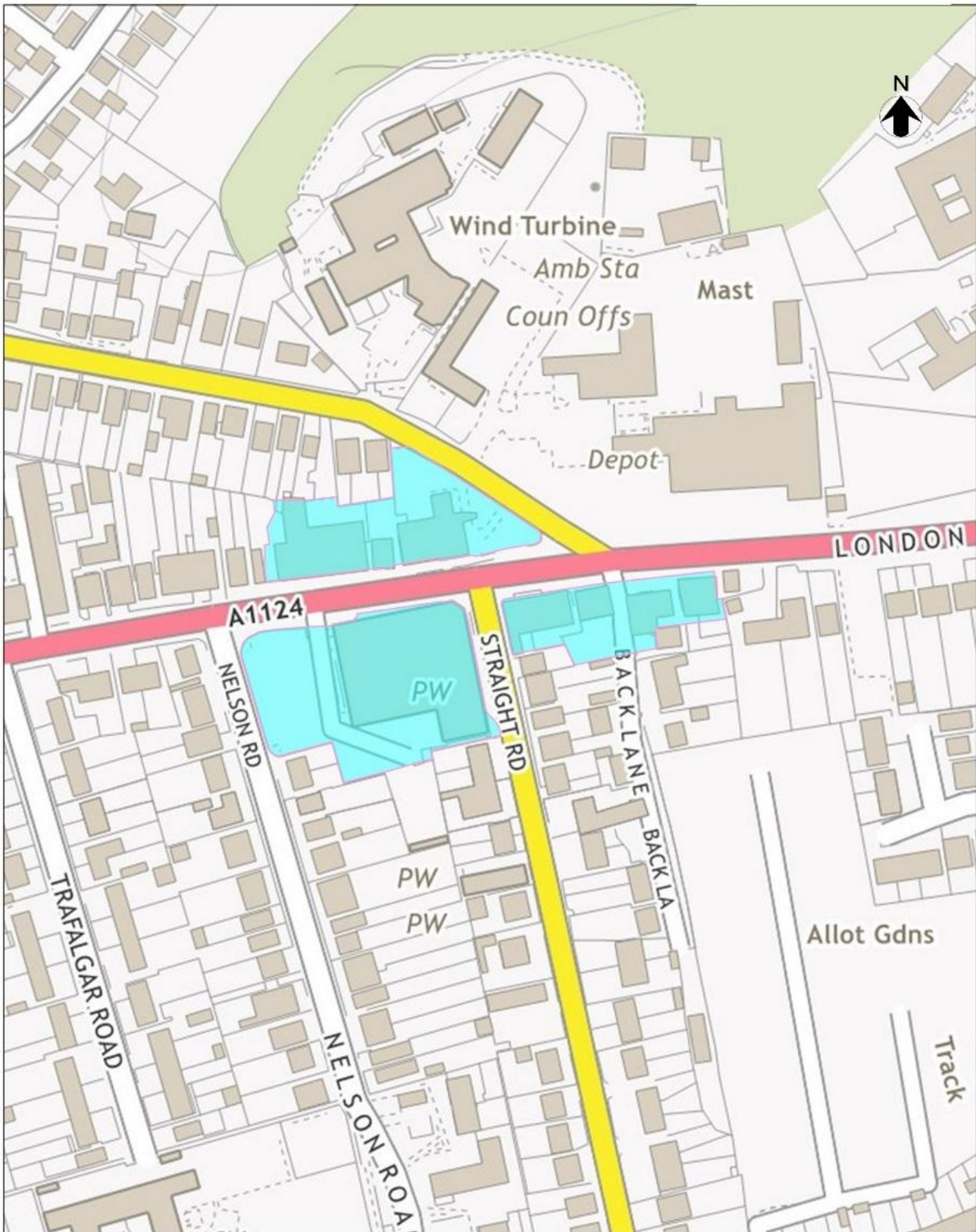
Hythe Quay



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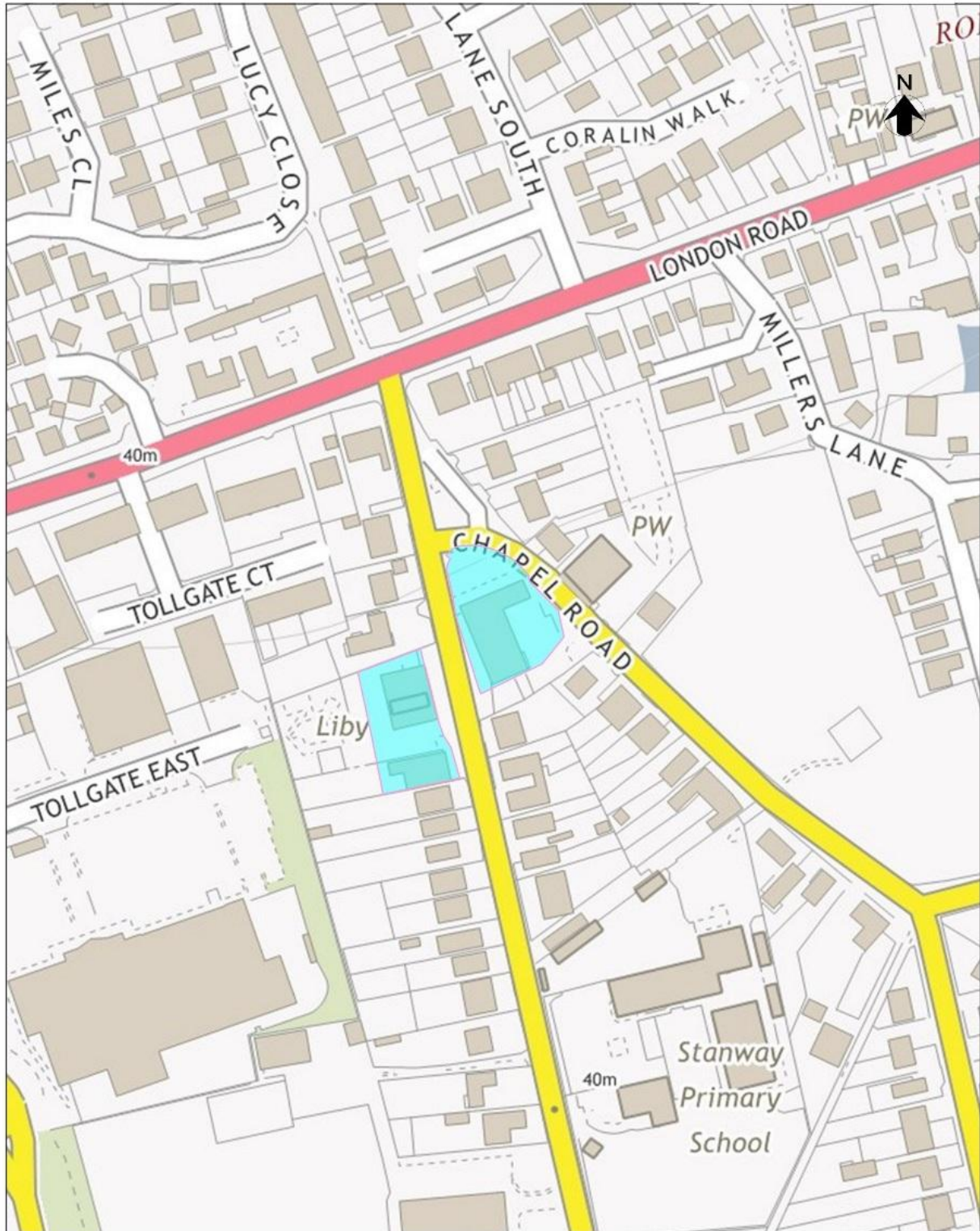
London Road, Stanway



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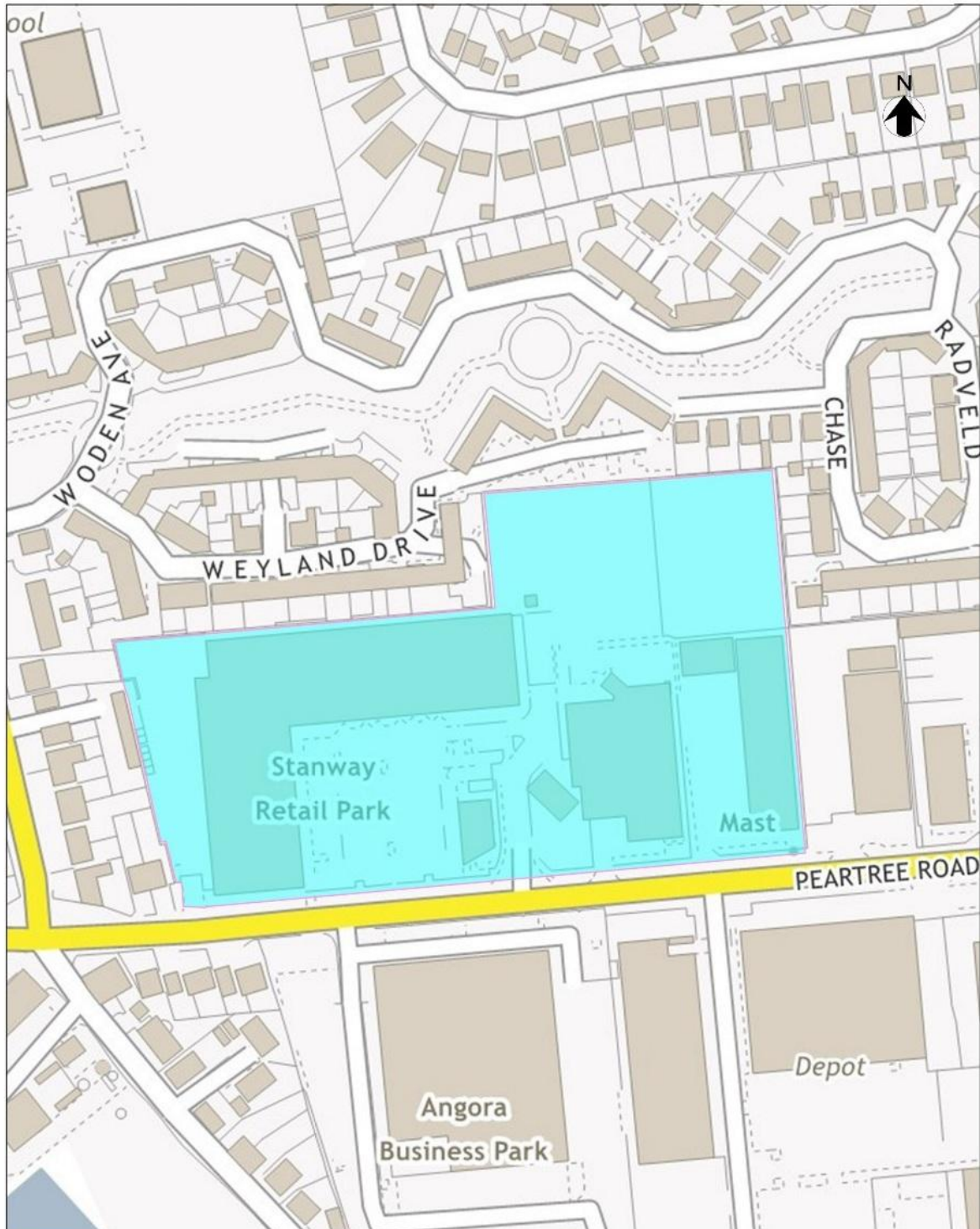
Villa Road, Stanway



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Pearlree Road, Stanway

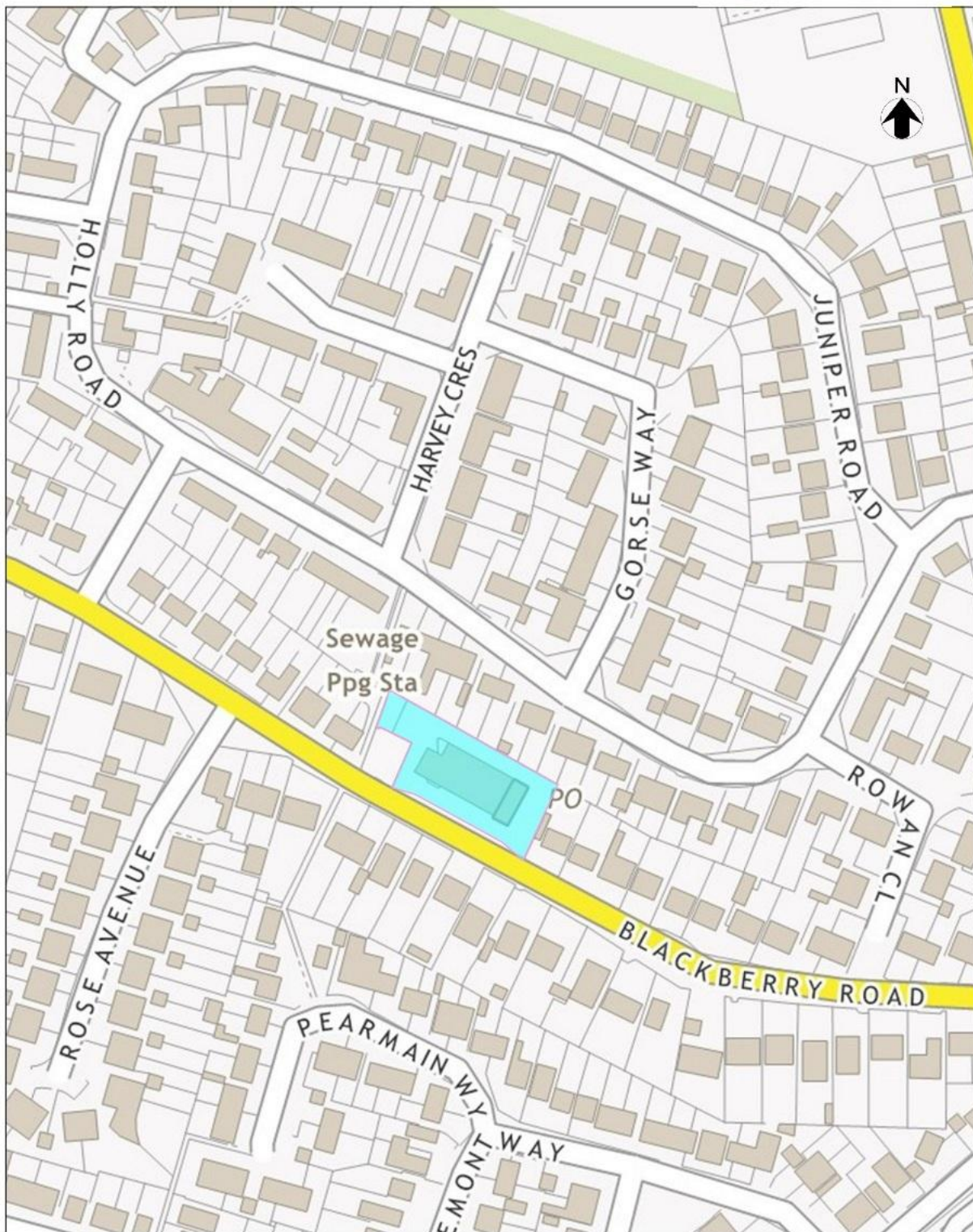


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This is a District Centre in the Adopted Local Plan, but has been proposed to be changed to a Local Centre and reduced in size in the Preferred Options Local Plan

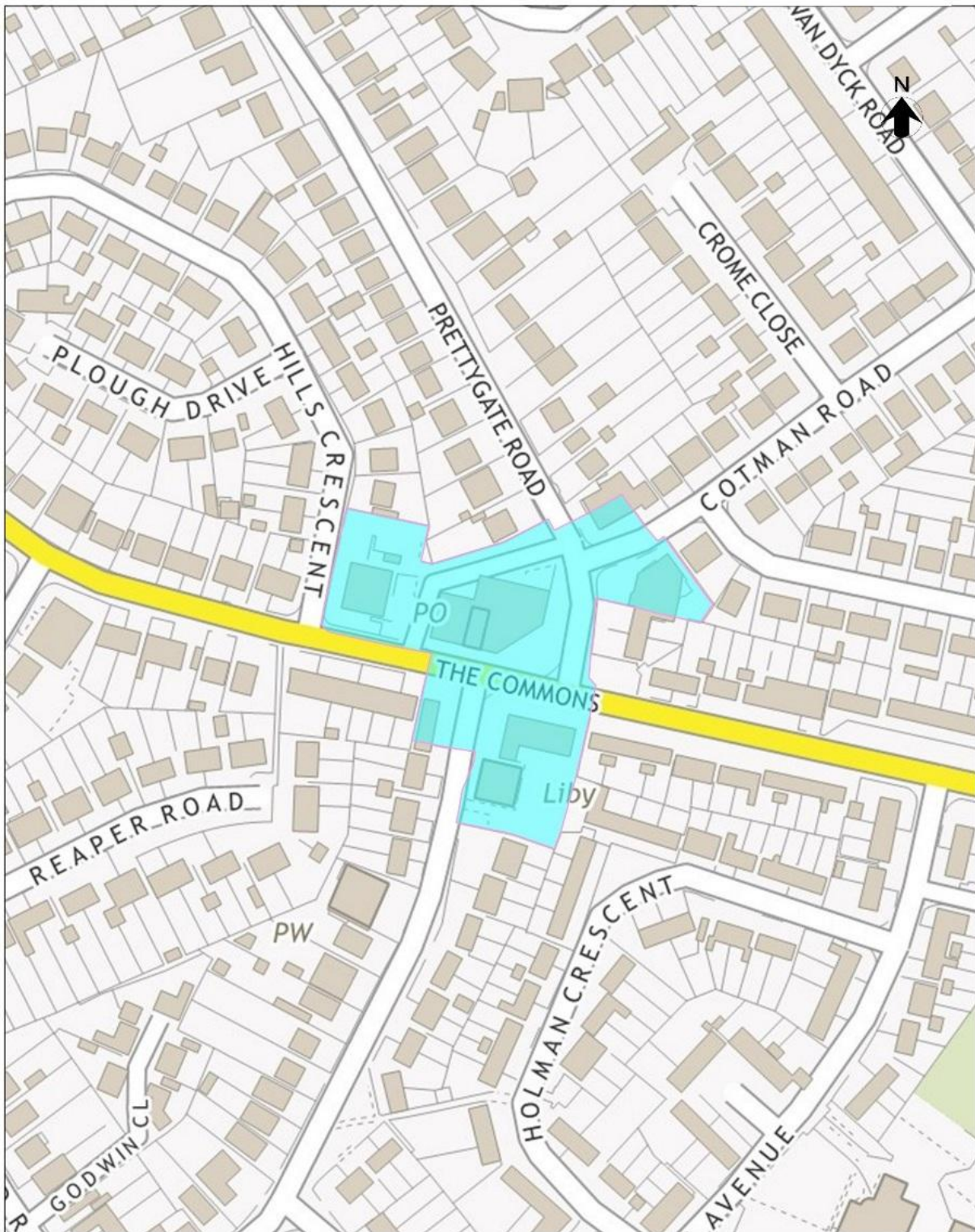
Blackberry Road, Stanway



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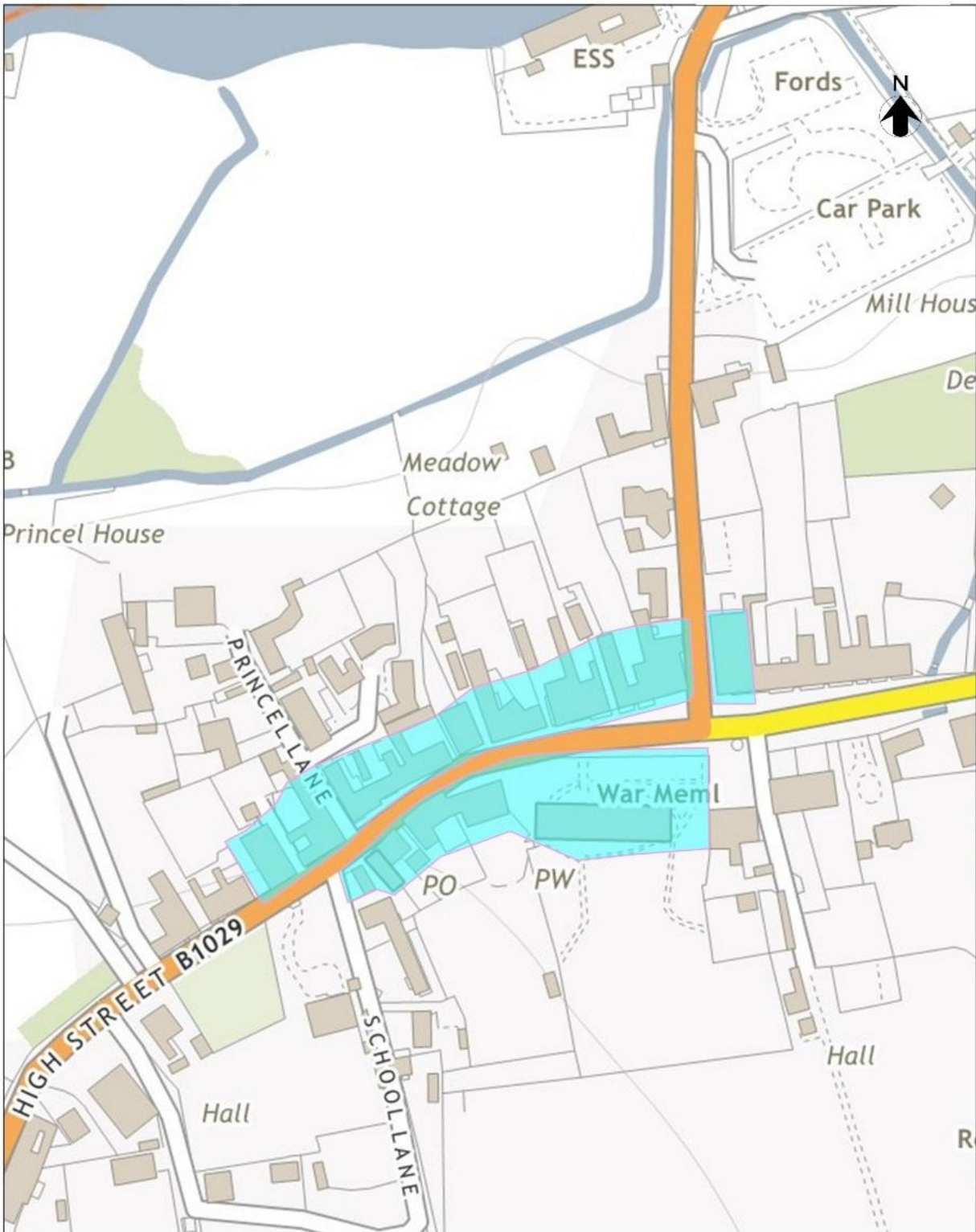
The Commons, Prettygate



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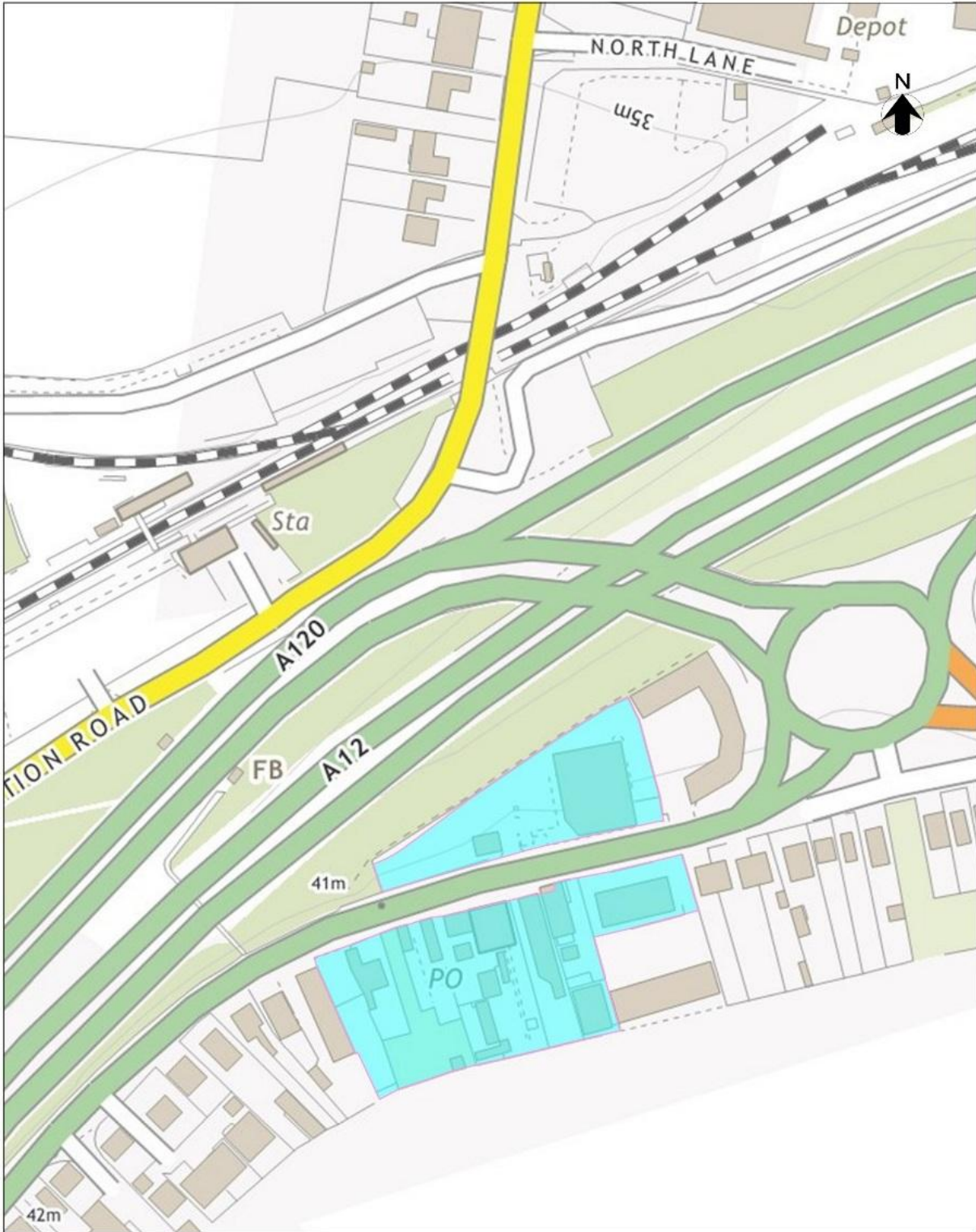
Dedham



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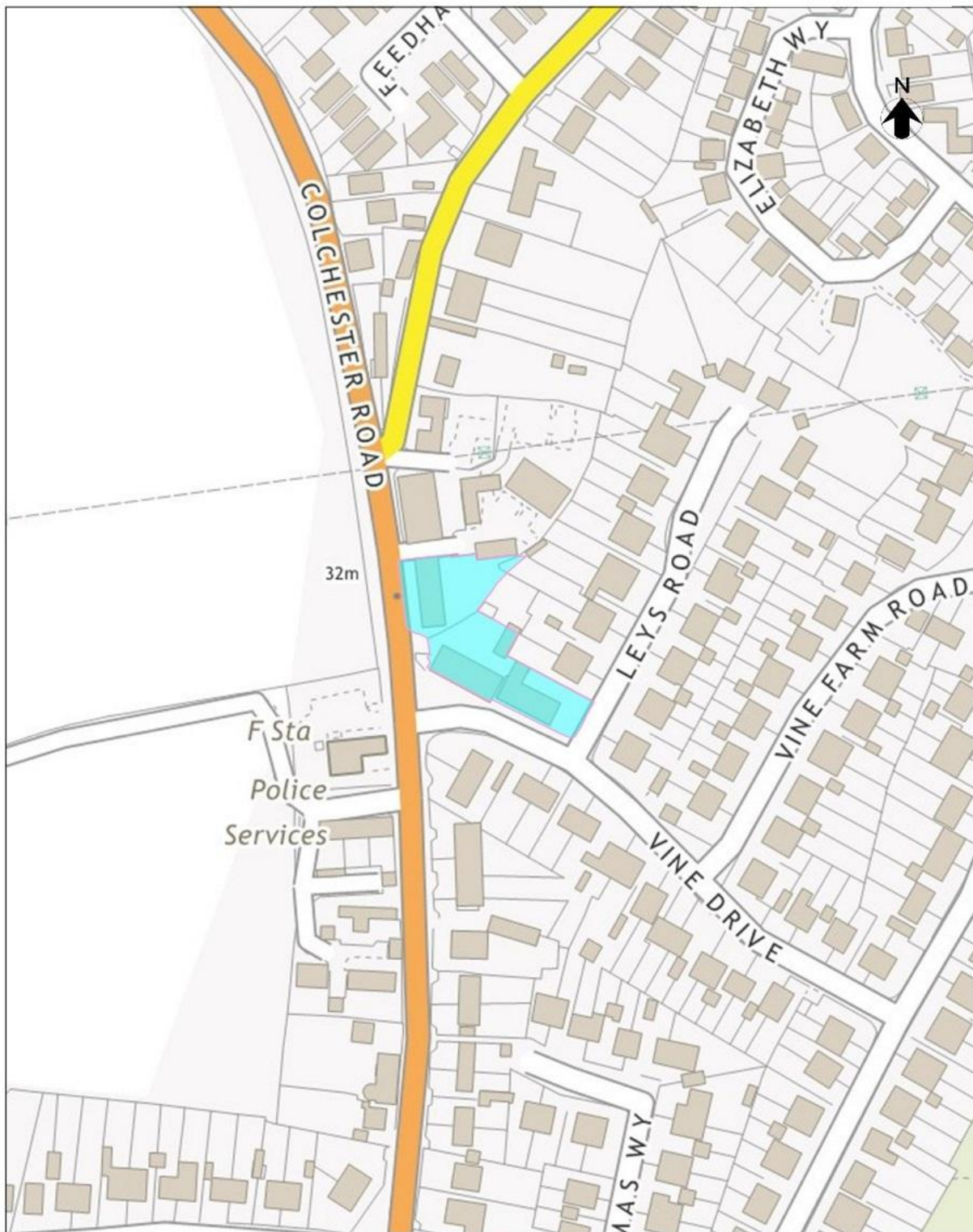
London Road, Marks Tey



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Vine Drive, Wivenhoe



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