

MARKS TEY GROWTH AREA

BACKGROUND REPORT: AUGUST 2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report has been prepared by consultants, ONH Planning for Good, on behalf of Colchester City Council (CCC) in support of its proposals for a new single policy (OA5) on the Marks Tey Growth Area (MTGA) in the submission Colchester Local Plan (CLP).

1.2 ONH had previously produced a Settlement Spatial Plan for Marks Tey Parish Council to make representations on the draft (Regulation 18) consultation on the CLP. Its critique of the draft proposals, based on a series of distinct future scenarios for Marks Tey, highlighted a number of inter-related land use, development delivery and infrastructure issues.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to summarise the process and evidence used by CCC and ONH since the end of that consultation to take forward the initial proposals for the Marks Tey area into the final draft CLP. The process comprised a deep review of the evolving evidence and consultation responses; the building of a land budget model of available (and potentially available) land to test alternative spatial options; meetings with different sets of internal (CCC and Essex County Council) and external stakeholders; and the development of a coherent preferred spatial option as the basis for the new policy.

1.4 The evidence comprised an updated position on land availability, additional data provided by various land promoters, emerging strategy on the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) in the Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance & Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) and additional transport modelling of the effects of development on the strategic highways network.

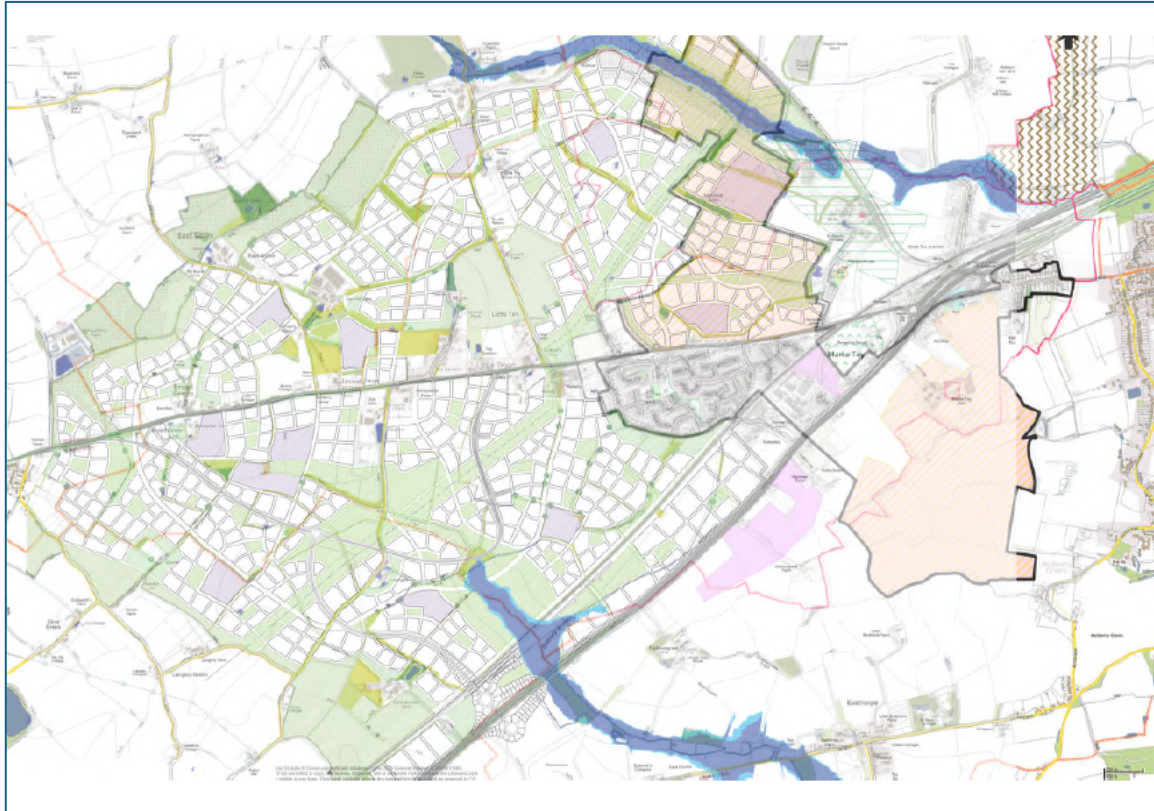
1.5 The report is structured to provide:

- **Background** – on the history of major developments to the west of Colchester and the evolution of the growth proposals up to the Regulation 18 consultation in late 2025
- **Methodology & Strategy Evolution** – explaining the project process, setting out the stages, the meetings and their outcomes and how a land budget model was built and operated to inform the preferred spatial strategy
- **The New Spatial Strategy** – a summary of the strategy and description of its land use, development, design and infrastructure components, illustrated on a Framework Plan
- **Appraisals & Assessments** – a summary of the iterations of the strategy using the inputs from these important perspectives
- **Implementation & Masterplanning** – setting out how the strategy will be implemented once the CLP is adopted

2. BACKGROUND

'WEST TEY' AND THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

2.1 The area covered by the MTGA has a long planning history, being part of the West Tey (also known as the 'Colchester Braintree Borders') Garden Community proposals (see Plan A). Those proposals for a new 21,000 home settlement were withdrawn from the Joint Local Plan Section 1 during its examination.



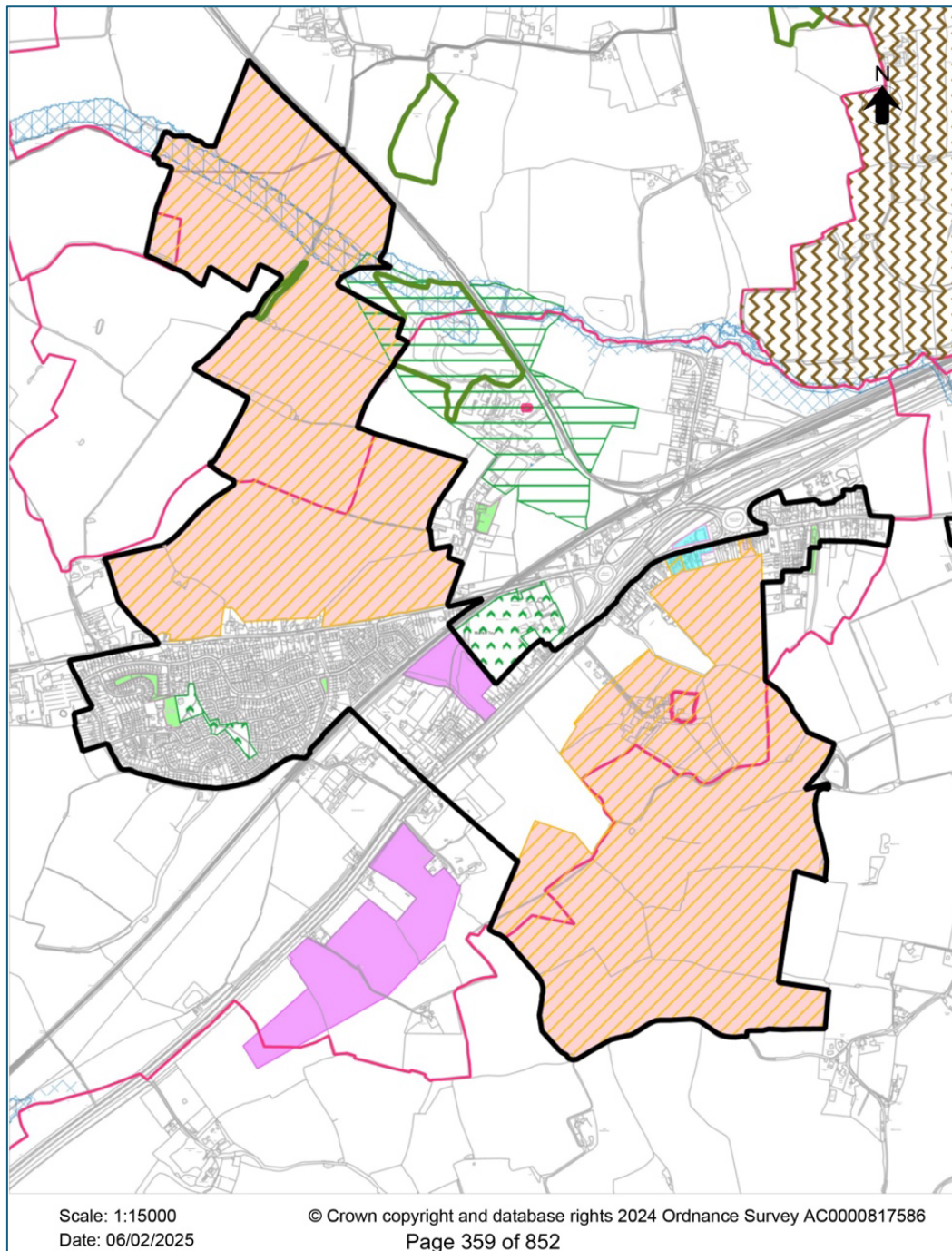
Plan A: The former West Tey Garden Community Illustrative Masterplan

2.2 The City Council is preparing a new Local Plan which provides the opportunity to reconsider strategic growth, revisiting some elements of those proposals on a more modest spatial scale. It remains the case that growth at Marks Tey, accords with the principles of the spatial strategy given its excellent public transport and highways connectivity, and relative proximity to the City.

2.3 The evidence gathered for the earlier stages of the Plan and its site assessment and sustainability appraisal work, supported that view and Marks Tey was identified as contributing a significant proportion of planned growth aligned with the preferred spatial strategy for the city.

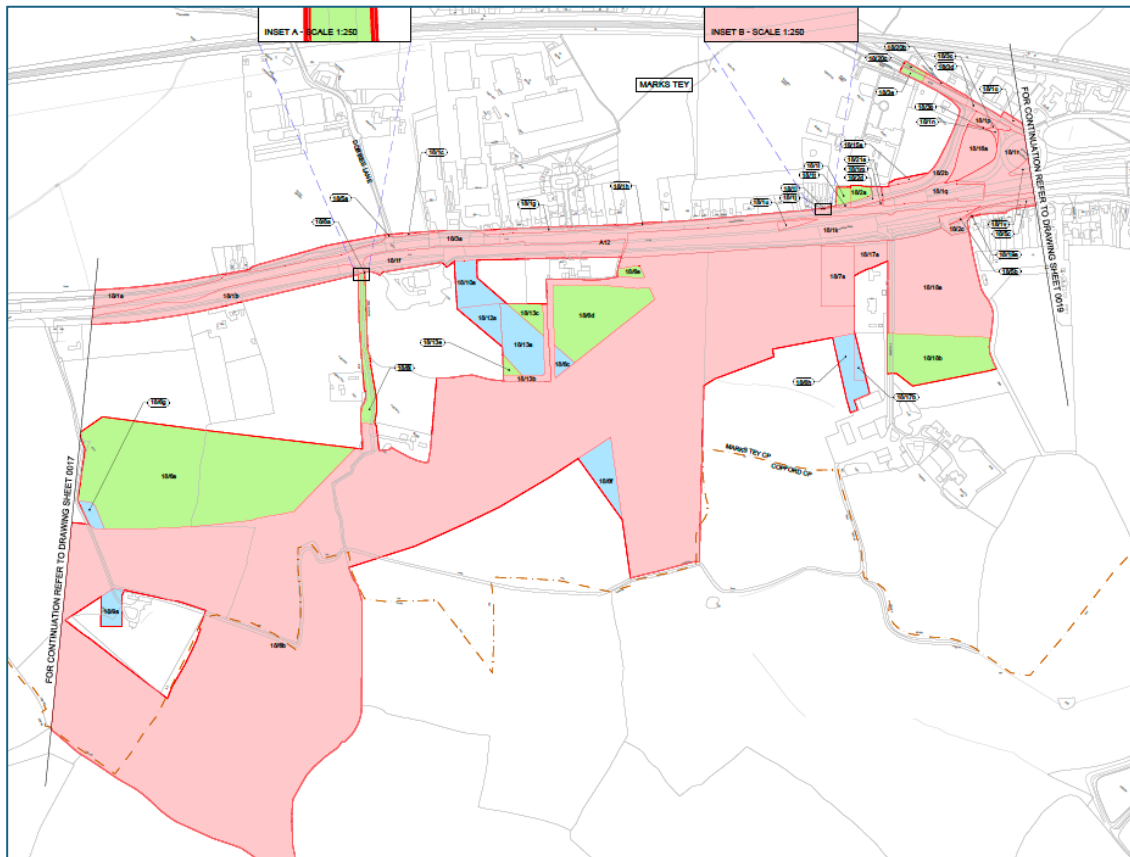
2.4 Growth at Marks Tey therefore formed a key part of the spatial strategy proposed in the Preferred Options draft Local Plan as one of four 'growth and opportunity areas' beyond the city's urban area.

2.5 Sufficient land had been promoted that was considered suitable in principle to deliver around 2,500 homes and 19 Ha of new employment land to the north of the A120 and south of the A12. Four sites were proposed for allocation: two for housing-led growth (policies PP17 and PP18) and two for employment (PEP5 and PEP6).



Plan B: The Preferred Options Regulation 18 Policies Map Extract for Marks Tey

2.6 The evidence and sustainability appraisal supported the allocations but also identified the need for further refinement to inform the Submission plan particularly in respect of the the transport evidence, including more consideration about mitigation requirements following the cancellation of the funding for the agree A12 widening scheme (junction 19 -25). This was identified as being expected to support a Submission draft Plan. The policies therefore identified that further evidence would be required to support the Submission Plan to demonstrate how the supporting infrastructure and mitigation measures would be viable and effective.



Plan C: Extent of land required in the former A12 Widening Development Consent Order at Marks Tey

REVIEWING THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

2.7 A wide range of representations were made on the draft proposals at Mark Tey during the Regulation 18 consultation period, from the statutory bodies, land interests, infrastructure providers and the local communities. In CCC's summary of those representations they made the following key observations:

- **Cross-cutting themes** - all four allocations attract objections on the capacity of the A12 and A120. National Highways states neither corridor can accommodate additional growth without significant intervention, and that no capacity enhancements are currently proposed; the cancellation of the A12 widening scheme recurs throughout.

There is a repeated demand for a comprehensive MasterPlan covering the whole Marks Tey Growth Area, with objections to piecemeal allocation. Under policies PP17, PP18 and PEP5 alike, the summary records a suggestion that a new policy identify the broad location for growth, with masterplanning taken forward through a Supplementary Plan, and notes that a Settlement Spatial Plan has been submitted as a proposed basis for growth and policies. Anglian Water, the North East Essex Alliance ICB and ECC (Education) confirm willingness to work collaboratively on infrastructure solutions for both residential allocations.

- **Land South of A12 (Policy PP17)** - scale seen as disproportionate, with fears of village coalescence and loss of identity; calls for housing to meet local needs. The north/south split across the A12/A120 is said to worsen severance and produce car-dependent, poorly located sites, with unsafe or impractical access. Concerns cover congestion, noise, pollution, insufficient public transport capacity, full parking at Marks Tey Station and rail services at capacity, plus fears development would foreclose future road improvements. Repeated calls for an infrastructure-first approach, noting the site was previously rejected on infrastructure grounds. Further objections address loss of high-quality agricultural land and greenfield, harm to ancient woodland and habitats (e.g. Pits Wood), Neighbourhood Plan conflict, and the absence of a clear rationale for concentrating growth here — including unclear testing of alternatives, little use made of the station, and a suggestion allocations are land-ownership-driven rather than design-led. Historic England requires a full Heritage Impact Assessment. The promoter supports the policy, noting additional land now available following the A12 cancellation, while raising viability and infrastructure-cost concerns.
- **Land North of A120 (Policy PP18)** - widespread objection to scale and to fundamental change in Marks Tey's character; pressure on the already congested A120 and A12; the physical divide created by the A12, A120 and railway, with a bridge sought. Objections that the allocation is undeliverable, referencing previous Inspector decisions, and that the Preferred Options Plan conflicts with the adopted Marks Tey Neighbourhood Plan. Also raised: environmental harm, water supply, wastewater and flood risk, inadequate active travel (walking, cycling, equestrian), coordination with neighbouring authorities' growth, and suggestions that development be directed south instead.
- **Land South of A12 (Policy PEP5)** - unclear how the employment relates to the rest of Marks Tey or would be safely accessed; the designation should be reconsidered within a Marks Tey masterplan including a strategic trunk-road solution.

Deliverability questioned post-A12 cancellation; calls to safeguard the A12 route. ECC notes extensive junction work would be needed and that the site is severed from the community and from both strategic residential allocations. Multi-user tracks sought; Historic England requires a full HIA; the promoter supports employment use.

- **Anderson's Site (Policy PEP6)** – concerns about light pollution; increased lorry and van movements at the A120/Old London Road junction; demonstration that traffic can be accommodated; no significant retail; protection of the adjacent bridleway and equestrian interests; clarification of planning status; and criteria on infrastructure protection, flood and pollution risk and sustainable drainage. ECC considers employment areas would also benefit from comprehensive masterplanning.

2.8 In addition, more land in the area had been made available for development in a strategically significant location near the station (see Plan E below). Natural England has also provided a clearer steer on how it expects the Marks Tey Growth Area (alongside other major growth locations in the CLP) will need to incorporate Suitable Alternative Natural Green space (SANG) as well as RAMS financial contributions in order to comply with the Habitats Regulations.

2.9 In response, CCC has sought to:

- Maximise the opportunities through a comprehensive masterplan for the whole Marks Tey Growth Area, rather than piecemeal allocations, covering vision, phasing, infrastructure timing, access and design principles
- Seek to take an infrastructure-first approach, with roads, schools, healthcare, utilities and public transport planned for and delivered in phases as development proceeds
- ensure the proposals deliver safe pedestrian, cycle, and multi-user connections, including links across the A12/A120 and protection or improvement of Public Rights of Way
- continue to work collaboratively with Anglian Water, Essex County Council (Education), the North East Essex Alliance ICB, and National Highways and the Parish Council.

A NEW VISION FOR MARKS TEY

2.10 Although the representations made many references to the draft proposals, few challenged their rationale or vision. Consideration of the issues raised in the representations and further work has inform revisions to the the vision for growth at Marks Tey::

“Marks Tey will become an enhanced village community supporting a growing new population. It will be self-contained for meeting everyday needs and offers excellent regional public transport connectivity for those commuting to work and connections to and from Colchester City Centre.

It will offer a popular partnership of secondary and primary schools and early years facilities that meet the needs of the local community, with most pupils walking and cycling to school using the attractive enhanced active travel network. The village will also benefit from more shops and services and from three areas of strategic public open space park that encourage residents to stay local for informal recreation and dog walking.

Traffic management and significant public realm improvements will transform the village centre and Coggeshall Road, providing a realistic alternative for sustainable travel through the combined active travel and green infrastructure networks providing the community with safe and convenient alternatives to car journeys for work and leisure trips. Although the main roads may still be very busy at peak times, the harmful effect of congestion will be successfully mitigated through significant traffic management and public realm improvements.

The distinct history and identity of Marks Tey will remain influencing the context for the changing place.. Good design will ensure Marks Tey Hall and Church Lane have kept their special character and the design strategy and codes maintain a local identity.

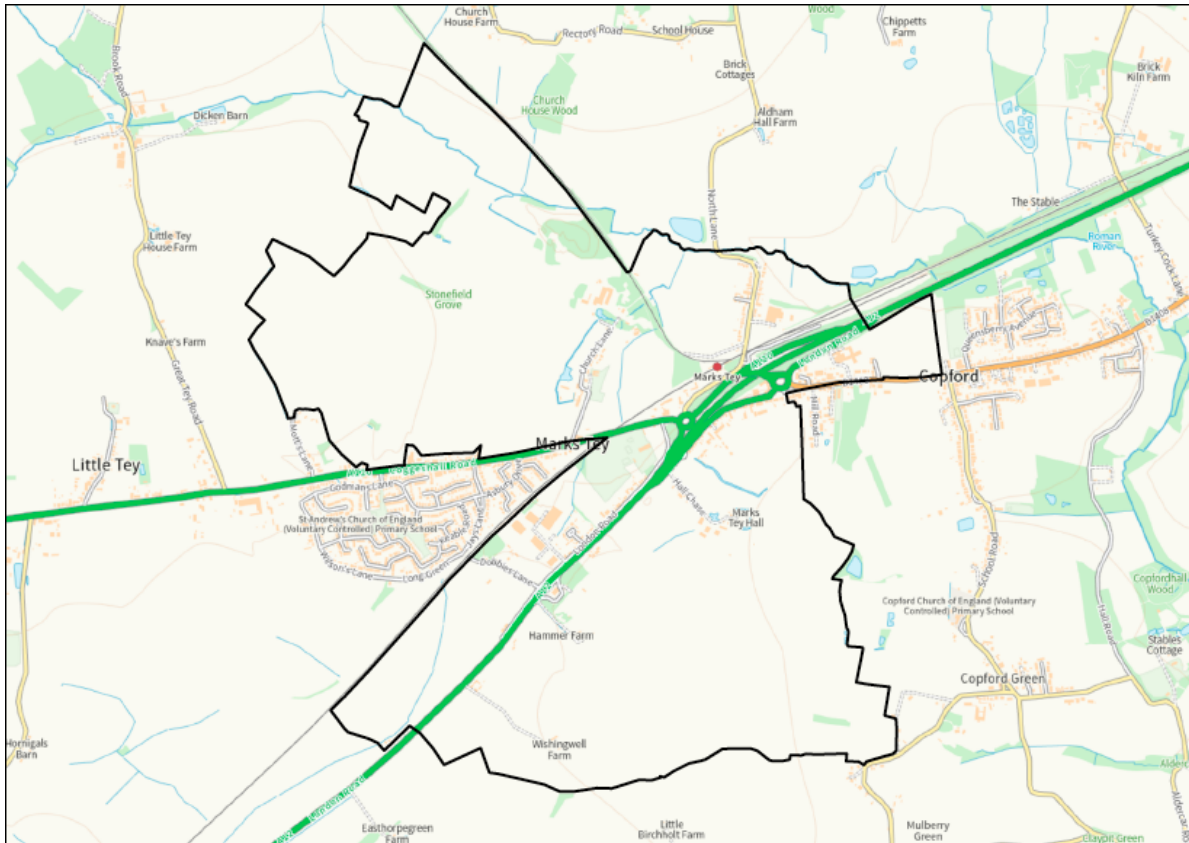
This vision will be realised by the collaborative approach between the Council, developers, infrastructure operators and local community working together consistently and effectively over the first decade in creating and delivering a comprehensive masterplan. This will ensure funding, phasing and delivery of the village’s new, high quality infrastructure works effectively for existing and new residents and businesses to enjoy and thrive.”

3. METHODOLOGY & STRATEGY EVOLUTION

3.1 CCC commissioned ONH to help it:

- provide a clear steer for the final draft Local Plan content in terms of policy requirements and securing the mechanism to refine more details for the longer-term growth (as well as for the initial phases);
- generate and test options with a variety of stakeholders, including land promoters, local communities and the statutory bodies
- consider the role and justification for further masterplanning, potentially through a new-style Supplementary Plan;
- evidence the deliverability of the growth planned in this plan period as well as indicate the potential for growth beyond that period, demonstrating how that longer term growth will deliver supporting infrastructure and will not be prejudiced by proposals for the shorter term; and
- set out a spatial strategy for growth in the plan period comprising a quantum of around 2,500 homes, strategic-scale employment land and their supporting infrastructure requirements.

3.2 A project team, including Officer and consultants, was formed in April 2026 and commenced with a review of all the evidence documentation and of the representations made on the draft proposals. It revisited the 2026 site availability data (see Plan E) and initial assessments in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and built a database of site information, including the ownership details of all the land in the area of search (see Plan D). That area extended beyond the land defined on the draft Policies Map to include sites north east of the station, east of Marks Tey and between the A12 and A120 south west of the village.



Plan D: Marks Tey Growth Area – Area of Search

STRATEGY EVOLUTION

3.3 Aside from now being only one policy, the most important change to its substance is the definition of the Growth Area boundary. The Preferred Options draft allocations identified four distinct sites (see Plan B); the new area proposed varies these areas excluding some parts of two of those sites (north of the A120 and south of the A12) and adds land south-east of the village, north-east of the station and south-west along the Old London Road.

3.4 The proposed growth area boundary incorporates all the land considered necessary to deliver the policy requirements, and at a sufficient scale and appropriate location to provide flexibility for the masterplanning work. The majority of the land is known to be available now but will require a phased release to follow up-front investments in SANG and active travel infrastructure. Some sites are expected to become available later in the plan period but do not hinder the development of nearby land.

3.5 The land beyond the proposed growth areas is identified as an indicative direction for future growth beyond the Plan period and is expected to remain available for the expansion of Marks Tey in the longer term. However, this area is preferred as a longer term growth option due to the need to prioritise the delivery of land located closer to the station, which has the potential to be delivered at higher densities and is well-located to deliver key sections of the new active travel and green infrastructure network.

3.6 Finally, the proposed boundary includes the land between Marks Tey and Copford identified as an area to be defined as a strategic green gap that is considered the minimum necessary to prevent the two villages coalescing to maintain their distinct identities.

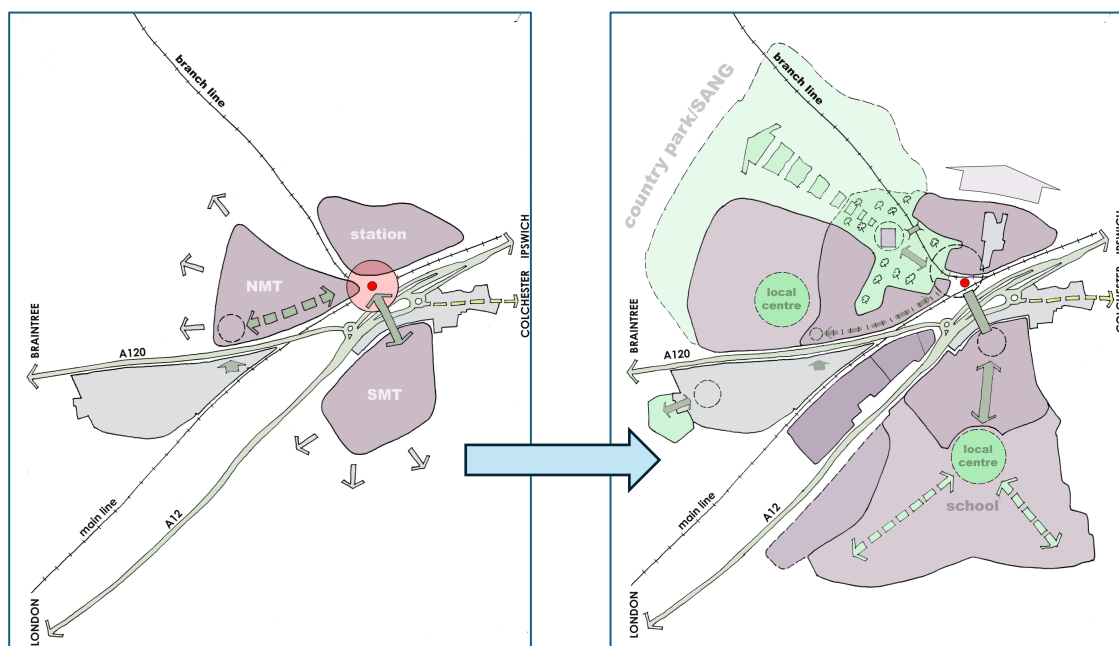


Fig. 1: Evolution of the Strategy

THE LAND BUDGET MODEL

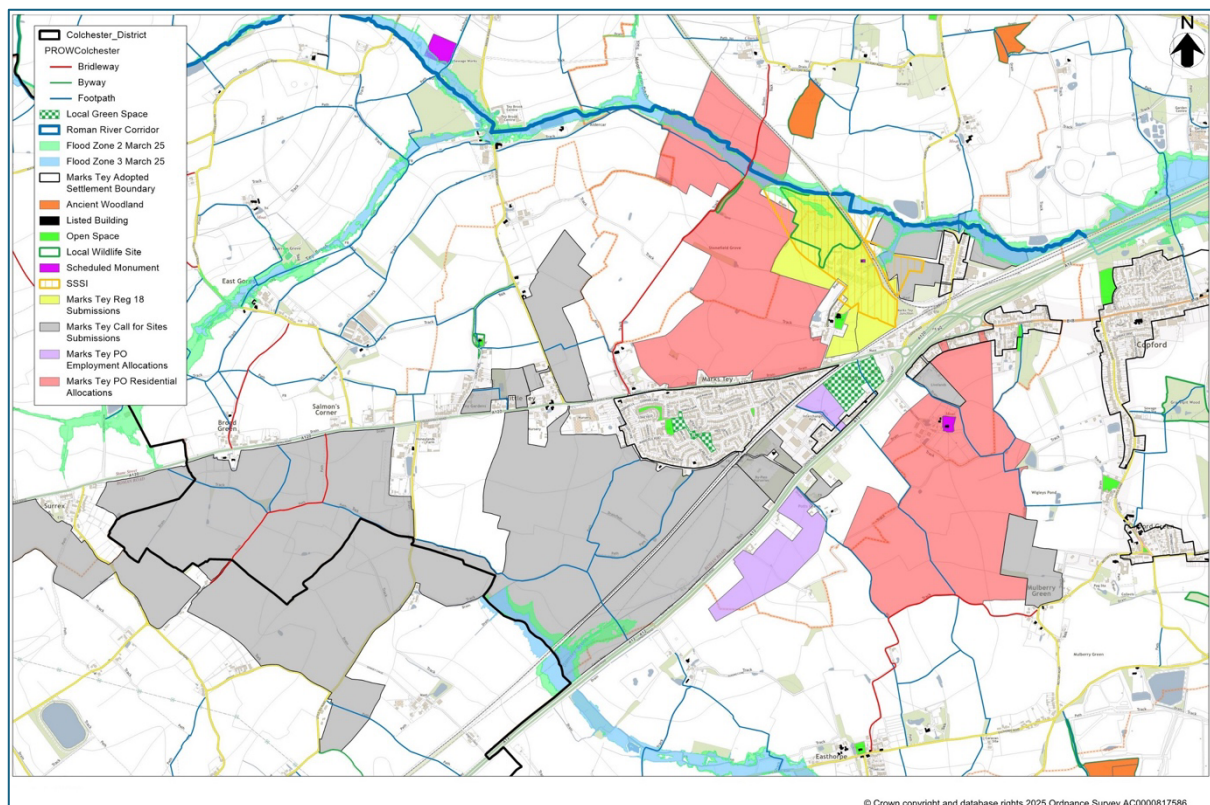
3.7 With the availability of additional, and potentially significantly located, land identified following the Regulation 18 consultation, it was considered that a land budget model would be helpful to interrogate and inform the relationship between different patterns and scales of land uses. With effectively only two main land promoters controlling the land proposed for allocation in that draft plan, such a model was unnecessary.

3.8 A land budget model is important in masterplanning more complex, if not larger, development areas with more 'moving parts'. It provides a quantitative tool to measure, allocate, and balance the surface areas designated for different uses—such as housing, commercial spaces, roads, and parks—within a group of specific potential development sites.

3.9 Using a simple spreadsheet format, a model defines for each site its:

- Gross site area: The total raw land boundary before deductions.
- Net site area: Usable land left after removing strategic infrastructure (e.g. distributor road) and major constraints like protected habitat (e.g. the Brickpits SSSI), flood risk areas and railway line noise buffers.
- Land allocation mix: The quantum of specific land uses.
- Density metrics (for residential uses): Dwellings units per hectare to calculate housing capacity.

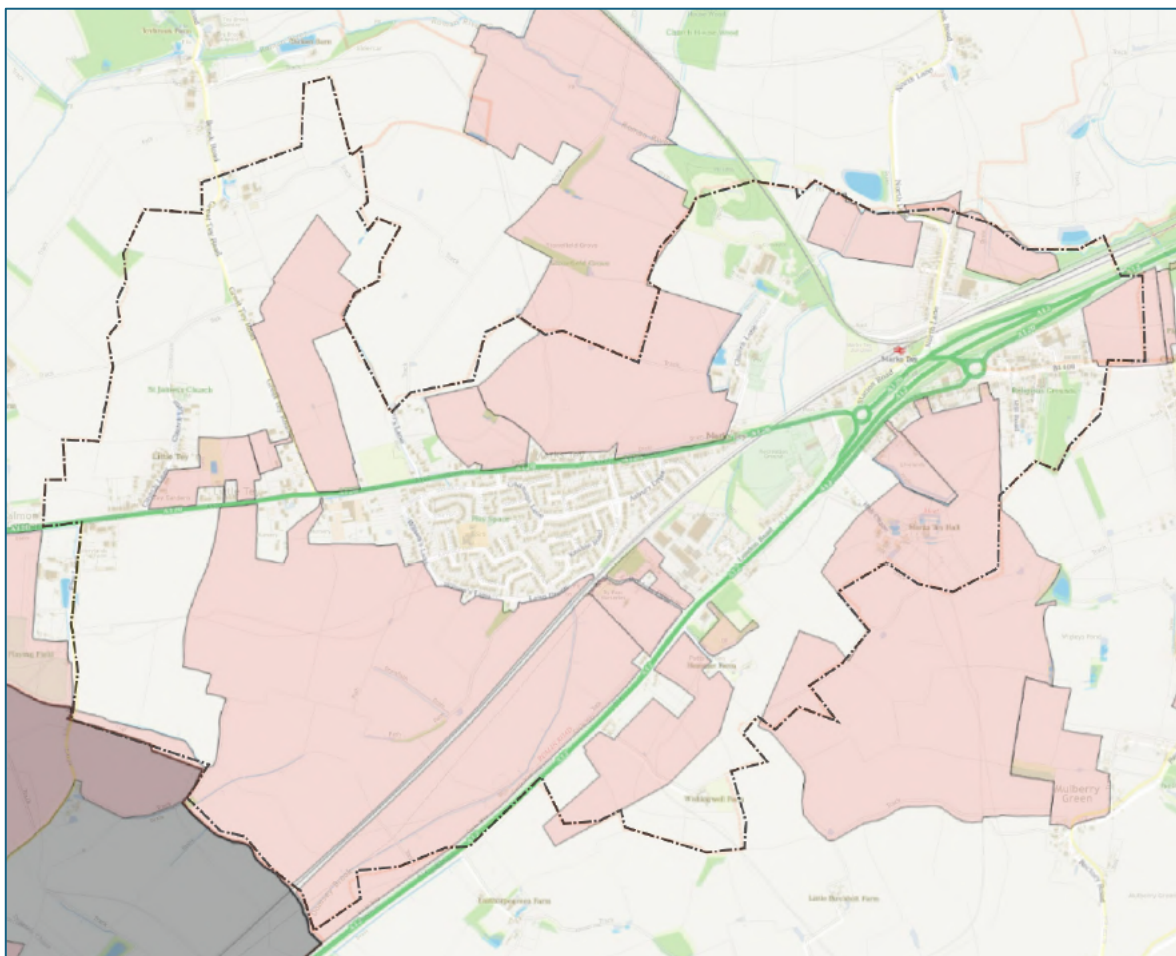
3.10 In every case, assumptions are made explicit and are applied consistently. For example, the same density metric is applied in the same spatial context, most notably in terms of bands of walking distances to the station. A snapshot of the spreadsheet is shown in Fig. 2 on p14.



Plan E: 2026 Land Availability and Constraints at Marks Tey

3.11 The model allows for feasibility testing, to assess if the distribution and scale of aggregated development is coherent and fits with the parameters set for the spatial strategy, i.e. policy compliance, infrastructure delivery thresholds. It also allows for testing to ensure any quantifiable policy requirements can be met, e.g. SANG, school pupil places, other public open space, car parking standards. Ultimately, it can be used, as here, to evidence the deliverability of the policy via one potential delivery scenario (acknowledging that other scenarios may also prove viable post policy adoption. Additionally, it allows testing of the overall financial viability of the strategy, where land values, delivery costs and infrastructure costs and timing can be estimated.

3.12 Modelling is therefore an iterative process, allowing for various ‘what if?’ options to be formulated and tested. For example, a site that is suited to a housing and/or an employment use was tested in different options in various permutations to identify key effects on the housing, employment and SANG outputs. As explained in the Methodology, its evolving summary outputs were circulated and discussed at the stakeholder sessions, which was especially helpful in defining the relationship between housing growth and the delivery of SANG, active travel and highways improvements.



Plan F: 2025 Strategic Land Availability Assessment Sites Map

3.13 Here, the model identified all the 2025 SLAA sites in the area of search (not just inside the eventual policy area boundary) and a small number of others that appeared to be well-located near the station that had not been made available in the most recent Call for Sites. As noted, they include a number of sites in the control of the Brickworks off Church Lane and land either side of North Lane.

3.14 For each site, data was collated from the SLAA (including the mapped constraints) and from the land promotion materials and supplemented with different assumptions about gross to net developable site areas and densities (i.e. dwellings per hectare). Primary land uses were assumed, based on the land interests' proposals but modified to take account of new land use requirements, e.g. SANG. In some cases, a more efficient use of land could be secured by combining adjoining sites to plan their optimal layout and mitigation measures (for example the major site around Marks Tey Hall and the adjoining, smaller Livelihoods site, which intrudes into that larger site).

MARKS TEY GROWTH AREA													
LAND BUDGET MODEL (2043+)											7.8.2026		
SITE DATA											Trajectory Phasing		
Site Number	Site Name (SLAA Ref)	Owner / Promoter Ref No.	Owner / Promoter	Outline Scheme Promotion?	Gross Site Area (Ha)	Gross/Net %	Net Developable Area (Ha)	Density (dph)	Potential Housing Capacity (No.)	Other Land Uses?	I (2032)	II (2043)	III (2043+)
23	Land at Brickyard, Church Lane	9	Boyden	N	23.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Primary school and SANG only		X	
24	Land adj Roman River (10846)	39	WH Collier	N	6.7	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	SANG only with 23		X	
27	Land North of A12	1	L&Q G120 consortium (Stantec)	Y	22.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Classes E/B8 only		X	
Notes:													
Land Budget (Ha):											290	696	1,267
Housing											0	550	0
SANG											624	420	1,704
Class E											914	1,666	2,971
Education													
POS & Other											3	14	18
Total sites gross area											0	1	0
Housing											0	0	0
2,579 dwellings											3	15	18
SANG requirement:													
to 2032											0	27	0
to 2043											23	0	0
											23	27	0

Fig. 2 Snapshot of Land Budget Model

3.15 The model was then built to enable 'what if' scenarios to be tested for those sites whose location and character offer opportunities for different land uses, taking account of their consequent effects on the key land budget metrics, e.g. dwelling numbers, and employment and SANG land areas (see Fig. 2).

3.16 It therefore allows for the further testing of the precise location of the new secondary school, although at this stage it seems likely that to avoid exacerbating traffic issues on the A120 and its junction with the A12 it will be preferable for it to be located in the South development zone.

3.17 There is also some flexibility in the distribution and timing of primary school and early years provision (which will be further informed by forecast planning by the Education Authority as master reflecting other demand and birth rate changes) and there are options for the location of SANGs (given much of the available land is suited in principle to that use).

3.18 In refining the land budget model, the project team met with all of the land interests in the area (see para. 3.51). The goal was to identify any key differences in assumptions made about design, constraints, availability and phasing and to build confidence in the CLP providing the policy framework to agree a comprehensive masterplan and infrastructure strategy.

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

3.19 It is acknowledged that to address the comments made on the draft proposals and to bring forward a broadly supported final strategy and policy in the CLP it had to engage proactively with key stakeholders, including - Essex County Council on Highways matters; Network Rail; Natural England, the Land Promoters; and Marks Tey Parish Council.

3.20 The first of two workshops were held with CCC and the County Council officers to share observations and insights on the story so far, on the key issues arising from the consultation, and agreeing those most important questions that needed to be answered. It was quickly agreed that the final draft CLP should contain one strategic policy for the Growth Area to replace the four previous site allocations.

3.21 The second workshop involved other parties, notably Natural England, which made clearer its emerging requirements for the delivery of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANG) as part of the updating of the Essex Coast RAMS. Additionally meetings were held with National Rail, to ascertain its land ownership ambitions and any operational constraints to growth; with transport consultants advising the highways authority to explore the full potential of active travel and public transport measures; and with Marks Tey Parish Council, to update it on the work completed and in hand.

3.22 At the second workshop, the County Council advised that it is expected Marks Tey to be the location for a new secondary school to serve the west of Colchester. The school would be needed in the plan period to meet the demand for pupil places not just from Marks Tey but also from other housing growth planned in and around the city. It also proposed that the new school would best be delivered as an 'all-through' facility with one of the new primary schools and early years provision on a single site.

3.23 In the light of the steer provided by the workshops and meetings a land budget model was built and refined to understand the inter-relationships between the developable housing capacity of almost 30 separate sites in the area of search and other non-housing uses and infrastructure requirements. Assumptions on average housing densities and the distribution of shared infrastructure (e.g. schools, open space) were made and tested using known (e.g. SANG) and estimated (e.g. school place) thresholds.

3.24 Aside from the review of all the land in the area, the project team was mindful of the draft NPPF published in December 2025, which directs higher density housing development around 'well-connected' stations like Marks Tey.

HIGHWAYS

3.25 Highways matters had been flagged by CCC as the most crucial to address in the project. A viable spatial strategy had to avoid any dependency on securing major public sector investment in highways infrastructure (i.e. the A12/A120) during the plan period. Thereafter, the scale and timing of growth may either have to secure that funding, be sufficient to create the residual values to finance the programme, or continue to invest further in other mitigation measures including active travel and public transport alternatives to build and maintain a meaningful modal shift.

3.26 A meeting was held on 18 June with County Council officers and their consultants (Jacobs) to understand the background to the transport capacity studies that were carried out to support the Regulation 18 proposals and to review the emerging proposals.

3.27 This included assumptions concerning the existing capacity, the contribution of the employment element to traffic generation, the assumptions about junction improvements and their impact on capacity, and the overall conclusions.

3.28 The land promoters' submissions to the CLP to date were then reviewed in the context of the plan land area proposed for allocation to understand the assumptions made by the land interests and how these fitted into correct transport study work.

3.29 The indicative scheme layouts as put forward by the major land promoters in each of the three development zones were reviewed and discussed in terms of their access capacity individual and collective impacts.

3.30 The concept plan (Plan H) and land budget model were discussed concentrating on the residential elements. Special attention was given to the new emerging spatial features, i.e. the land in the North West zone that was being reconsidered for allocation, the additional land made available in that zone and the principle of requiring a significant uplift in the average housing densities within 800 metres of the station.

3.31 It was noted that the additional land in the North East zone at around the Brickworks and off North Lane could increase the development capacity within proximity to the station. Land could also be used as new public open space, for a primary school and to create a direct active travel link between land in the North West zone and the station.

3.32 It was also noted the strategy concentrates on delivery within the CLP period to 2043 only but it establishes a longer term strategy and direction of growth without compromising future improvements to the A12 and A120.

3.33 The concept plan illustrates how a pedestrian-cycle movement framework could help deliver better place making outcomes and reduced traffic impacts. A route through the North West zone could be achieved to the north of the A120 delivering a safer and more attractive route to the station for the new development. With a crossing to the A120, it could also provide a route to the station for the existing Marks Tey residents. There are also opportunities to connect the North East zone with this route using the existing pedestrian tunnel under the branch line to give access to the public open space and other amenities.

3.34 It was noted the South zone could benefit from an improved foot bridge connection to the station which has already been considered in the proposals and transport studies of the main land promoter. The northern part of the zone is a natural place for a local centre which is close to the station and builds on the existing Old London Road uses. To the south, the development would be organised around a green spine to prioritise pedestrian and cycle movements to the local centre, Old London Road, and the station.

3.35 The options for locating the 'all-through' secondary school, primary school and early years facility were discussed, as well as noting the need for at least one other primary school and early years facility in the plan period. The effect of trips generated by the secondary school from outside Marks Tey were discussed, given its wider strategic purpose to serve growth west of Colchester. It was observed that a location in the South zone would likely be preferred given the configuration of the A12/A120 junction.

3.36 The meeting also discussed how the emerging strategy may enable the avoidance of major highways infrastructure improvements, which it may struggle to afford, even at the scale proposed. As well as the active travel measures the principles for a new Rapid Transit System (RTS) from Marks Tey through the west of Colchester, accompanied by a Park & Choose facility were discussed.

3.37 It was noted there are options to deliver a Park & Choose facility either side of the A12, perhaps allowing for two facilities to operate independently in terms of their connection to Colchester, whilst being close enough to offer a choice. It was also noted that the South zone land promoter had made representations to the CLP that an RTS of the specification and cost outlined would render development there unviable.

3.38 The need for the strategy to deliver a similar scale of employment land as proposed at the Preferred Options Regulation 18 CLP stage was considered. In particular in the light of the potential difficulty accessing the Policy PEP5 land south of the A12 following the withdrawal of the funding for the DCO for the A12 widening scheme. . Other evidence considered the employment located as for the Preferred Options Plan, it is envisaged that the masterplanning work would further inform the precise location and type for employment land within the Growth area.

3.39 Although the effects of trips generated by the types of use that may see this as a competitive business location – notably lower job density warehousing – may not be as significant as those generated by other uses, the effects need to be remodelled through the masterplanning. The proposed growth area does not define any sites, although anticipates a similar quantum of 19ha of employment land being provided during the Plan period.

3.40 Finally, a series of observations were agreed:

- The network around J25 of the A12 is currently at or near capacity.
- The biggest impacts will be on journey times for development in the North East zone.
- Delivering additional capacity will require mitigation through junction improvements and major, upfront active travel and public transport schemes that achieve significant modal shifts.
- The emerging strategy creates a green infrastructure and movement framework that could contribute to modal shift and provide for the spatial integration of the active travel, public transport and P&C schemes.
- The emerging strategy is based on the accesses as proposed by the land promoters and as used for the modelling.

- There is currently no accessible route to and between the platforms at the station. Network Rail need to be engaged through their 'Access for All' programme.
- National Highways need to continue to be engaged on the emerging proposals and masterplanning work.
- The strategy is anticipated to have the flexibility to locate a transport hub and P&C scheme either side of the A12 with separate routes connecting to Colchester
- A master planned approach based on a masterplanned development framework will be required to be adopted as a Supplementary Plan or similar, as appropriate
- The allocation will need to include a wider development area to allow for future flexibility and design development.

NETWORK RAIL

3.41 Neither Network Rail nor the Rail Operating Company, Greater Anglia, had raised concerns with the draft CLP proposals. However, the dependency of those proposals on access to, and development around, the station to drive up passenger traffic was not as great at that stage as is now proposed in the emerging concept plan and land budget model.

3.42 A meeting was held with Network Rail to ascertain the extent and availability of land in its ownership and to seek its advice on the potential operational consequences of major growth on the station and its local area. It was not possible to arrange a meeting with Greater Anglia within the project period to discuss those same operational issues. This can be pursued as the Local Plan and master planning progresses.

3.43 Network Rail confirmed its land ownership and operating area around the station. It supported in principle the idea for connecting the eastbound main platform to the North West development zone via land it owns extending west towards Church Lane. It also agreed, in principle to allow its land at and adjoining the northern car park to be considered as developable land, subject to the safe and convenient access to the station not being compromised. Some form of 'travel hub' connecting buses and active travel routes with the station seemed possible, especially if non-operational land at and adjoining the southern car park (operated by Greater Anglia) could also be considered.

3.44 On that basis it was agreed that no further meeting was necessary at this stage. Network Rail would, however, wish to engage in the subsequent masterplanning process and encouraged engagement with Greater Anglia/Great British Railways in the meantime.

NATURAL ENGLAND

3.45 Although the representations made by Natural England had not raised specific objections to the draft CLP proposals for Marks Tey, CCC anticipated that the review of the Essex Coast SAC RAMS strategy would trigger a need for the final CLP strategy and policy to accommodate sufficient, qualifying Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces (SANG). The Natural England representation also confirmed the position in respect of the requirement for SANG to be delivered on strategic sites.

3.46 The focus of the meeting with officers from Natural England (NE) was on three key questions. Firstly, could the Brickpits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) serve as a SANG without harming its nationally important geological (rather than ecological) interest or that part of the adjoining land that is the Local Wildlife Site?

3.47 NE advised that the risk of the SSSI being unacceptable as SANG is high, and the level of detail needed to demonstrate it would be acceptable would be beyond what will be available to complete the CLP. The area is an active research site with requirements for access that might be in conflict with use as a SANG. An alternative strategy will therefore need to be considered.

3.48 Secondly, would securing a total SANG area of (the then) 41 Ha indicated by the concept plan and land budget model satisfy the HRA obligations? NE advised the starting point will be the 8 hectare per 1,000 population standard and provision below this will not be acceptable. However, land used to link SANGs and their integration with other green infrastructure assets might qualify as contribution but this would need to be proposed and argued in the masterplan.

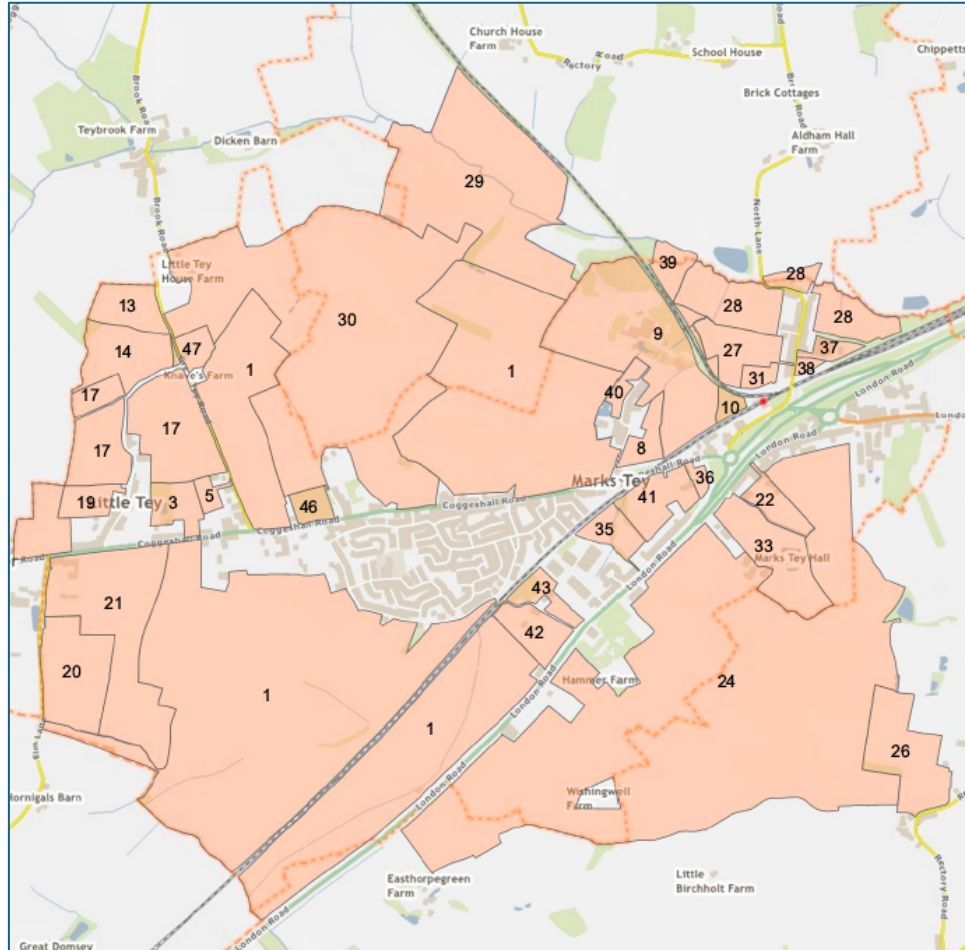
3.49 Thirdly, would the final draft CLP policy, masterplan and tariff be strong enough to allow CCC and NE to refuse any housing applications submitted in the interim on the basis that their respective Appropriate Assessments could not show the potential for significant negative effects on the SAC/SPA could be mitigated?

3.50 NE expects the SANG approach to be applied to the CLP policy allocation as a whole, not on a site-by-site basis and therefore the minimum 500 home qualifying site threshold proposal in the emerging RAMS strategy should not be used. The practicalities of smaller schemes coming forward which will be unable to meet the minimum 2.4km single, circular walking route would mean they all have to secure spare capacity at a 'strategic' SANG.

3.51 As a result an alternative strategy was discussed based on SANG provision in the North West and South development zones, to be explored further in finalising the strategy and its framework plan. Although it was noted that neither of the major land promoters had yet made SANG provision, there appeared to be sufficient land made available within the area of search that may be suited to this purpose.

LAND PROMOTERS

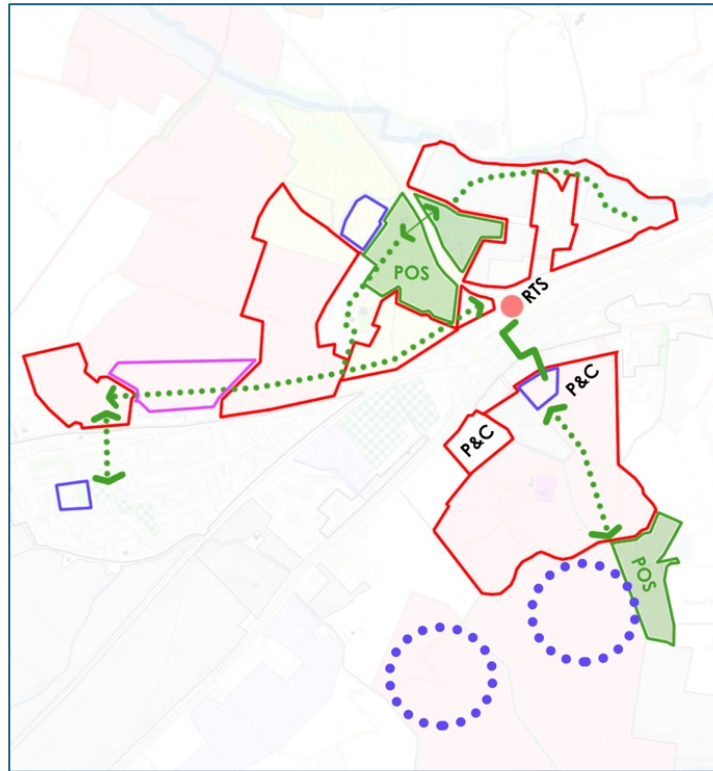
3.52 From the outset CCC understood that it must encourage the major land promoters to engage in the project if the new CLP policy was to allay their concerns on the draft policy and if the strategy and masterplan are to be successfully delivered.



Plan G: Land Ownership Pattern

5.53 Individual meetings were held with all the land promoters in the area of search between 23 June and 3 July to discuss the emerging concept and the promotional work (e.g. technical studies and stakeholder engagement) completed to date and in hand. Views were sought on the potential for collaborating with other land promoters in the production of the masterplan and on key development and design principles, e.g. a tariff and housing density assumptions. An emerging concept plan was used, drawn from an early iteration of the land budget model. explained at each meeting using a layered plan to show the sites, core station area, movement and green infrastructure principles.

3.54 The meetings concentrated on the residential parts of the allocation. SANG was covered at the meetings with all three land interests, but not discussed or explored in any depth. The promoters all confirmed that the land they controlled remains available for consideration and allocation in the CLP, though some Highways land may be needed for the A12 crossing improvements.



Plan H: Early Concept Plan

3.55 There was support for the strategy from all land promoters for the development principles. All are willing to work with other land interests to deliver the joint movement and green infrastructure required to deliver the concept. It was also agreed that a masterplan – in the form of a Supplementary Plan – would be necessary to enable a fair and equitable distribution and timing of the benefits and costs to be achieved across the parties.

3.56 To that end, some promoters suggested a Memorandum of Understanding is negotiated and agreed for the land promoters to demonstrate the strategy is supported and deliverable, and to discourage early planning applications.

3.57 The main area of concern expressed by most promoters is the reliance of the emerging strategy and its land budget model on achieving higher housing densities than the local market may bear. Although it was noted that the driver of the strategy is new Government policy requiring this approach near well-connected stations like Marks Tey, a smarter, graduated approach would likely be necessary.

3.58 Following the landowner meetings it seems sensible to consider the strategy as having three clearer development zones: land to the north of the railway line being in two parts – North West (west of the branch line) and North East (east of the branch line) to reflect the land ownerships, inter dependencies and infrastructure constraints, and land to the south of the railway line as a South zone mostly under the control of one land interest but with smaller pockets of land between the A12 and A120 on the Old London Road suited to an expansion of the existing industrial parks and around the station off North Lane.

3.59 All three zones have a core area closest (<200m) to the station where a higher density should be expected. Outside of this could be a ring – say 200m – 800m distance from the station – of medium-high density, and then the remaining housing at conventional suburban densities with a greater proportion of family homes.

3.60 It was agreed the boundaries between these zones will be explored through further capacity testing in the masterplanning work to establish a reasonable development footprint for the allocation. The allocation may not need to fix these boundaries spatially as some flexibility will be needed.

MARKS TEY PARISH COUNCIL

3.61 The Parish Council is also a key stakeholder, having scrutinised the draft proposals and made a series of important insights and comments on the draft CLP, both its own right and alongside other parish councils in the area. It is important to stress that although its commitment is maintained to its vision for Marks Tey the process of achieving the vision must include meaningful and ongoing engagement with the local communities.

3.62 A briefing session was held with members of the Parish Council on 8 June to inform them of the process CCC had embarked upon to deliver a submission CLP by the end of the year. ONH connected that process as a logical step from the Parish Council's own Settlement Spatial Plan and summarised the progress made in building and land budget model.

3.63 The emerging concept plan was discussed, and the significant spatial shift to a three zone plan from the simpler north-south split of the draft and a greater emphasis on the station and active travel.

3.64 It was agreed that all the parish councils would be encouraged to submit their representations to the submission plan in the autumn, to participate in the examination in 2027 and to engage in the masterplanning work once the CLP has been adopted.

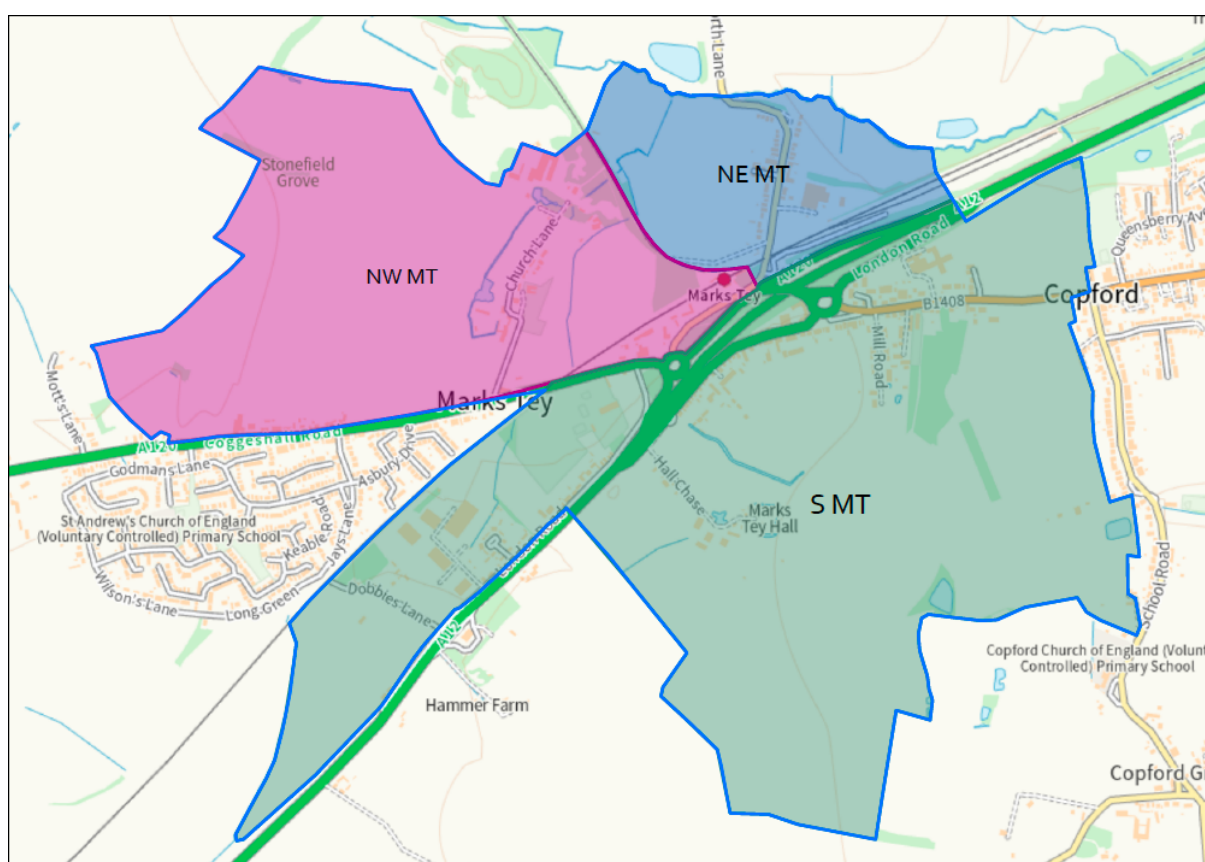
4. THE NEW SPATIAL STRATEGY

4.1 The evidence review, site assessments, land budget modelling and stakeholder liaison have enabled a modified spatial strategy for the Marks Tey Growth Area to be formulated. This now forms the basis of the final draft policy.

THE STRATEGY

4.2 The headline features of the strategy are:

- there are three development zones: north and west of the A12 and A120; south of the A12; and north and east of the railway station, the latter zone an additional area



Plan I: The Three Development Zones (North West, North East and South)

- housing of approx. 2,500 across those zones split generally evenly north and south of the A12 and with bands of higher density development within easy walking distance of the station, a conventional density zone beyond that but with a transition zone of medium density between the two
- the same scale of employment land (19 Ha) the precise location and nature of which to be defined through master planning. These considerations suggest potential for this to be reconfigured along the Old London Road between the A12 and railway line, some of which to replace the previous allocation proposal

south the A12 (if it cannot be made available with the land safeguarded for the longer term upgrading of the A12)

- a comprehensive, multi-functional approach to the planning and delivery of green infrastructure across the whole area, incorporating the timely delivery of 49 Ha of SANG and protecting the Brick Pit SSSI and Local Wildlife Site
- the delivery of a new secondary school to serve the western part of the city as well as Marks Tey, and two new primary schools and early years provision in the north and south
- an enhanced village centre off Old London Road south of the A12 and additional commercial space around the station and in a new local centre north of the A120
- a comprehensive package of timely and high quality active travel and public transport service improvements that, together with higher densities and improved access to the station from all zones, will avoid the need for major improvements to the A12/A120
- the potential for appropriate interim uses of the safeguarded A12 upgrading land (based on the former Development Consent Order (TR010060) land area), for example as a Park & Choose facility and/or additional green infrastructure
- a land use and design strategy that avoids harm to the collection of designated heritage assets at Marks Tey Hall and on Church Lane
- the definition in policy of a Marks Tey – Copford Strategic Green Gap to prevent the coalescence of the two settlements
- a development framework that will act as an enabler for the longer term growth of Marks Tey beyond 2043, set within a wider green infrastructure ring to transition to the wider countryside

THE KEY METRICS

4.3 With assumptions about phasing – and there appears to be a natural, market-led sequence of policy-compliant development and infrastructure delivery – the strategy has been structured using the land budget model.

4.4 In Table A below the total estimated potential quantum of housing, employment and SANG are shown for each of the three development zones (North West, North East and South) across the first five year deliverable period of the plan (2032), the developable period to 2043, and an estimated potential for a decade or more after 2043.

4.5 The potential delivery trajectory based on the land use budget and Framework Plan shows the following:

	<u>2027 – 2032</u>	<u>2033 – 2043</u>	<u>2043+</u>
Housing			
• NW	600	400	1,700
• NE	0	550	0
• S	300	700	1,250
	900	1,650	2,950
<u>Total 5,550 dwellings</u>			
Employment			
• NW	0	15	0
• NE	0	1	0
• S	3	0	18
	3	16	18
<u>Total 37 Ha</u>			
SANG			
• NW	0	26	32
• NE	0	0	0
• S	23	0	24
	23	26	56
<u>Total 105 Ha</u>			

Table A: Summary of Preferred Strategy Key Metrics

THE FRAMEWORK PLAN

4.6 The Framework Plan has been prepared to illustrate the key spatial principles of the policy area boundary to 2043 and beyond. It is based on the final iteration of the land budget model to this point.

Growth Area – the land within which the strategy to 2043 will be delivered and the basis for the boundary shown on the Policies Map for OA5.

High Density – the area closest to Marks Tey Station with potentially excellent active travel connectivity and enabling housing schemes of an average of at least 50 dph rising higher for mixed use housing and commercial schemes adjoining the station.

Medium Density – a transition area where enhanced densities should be explored, subject to delivering place making that is sensitive to site constraints including heritage assets on Church Lane and at Marks Tey Hall.

Active Travel Bridge – a critical component of the active travel network connecting the South development zone to the station and the remainder of the green infrastructure network and local services in the Growth Area, replacing the existing bridge with a wider platform for safe shared use and extending from the village centre on Old London Road across both the A12 and A120 to North Lane.

Active Travel Route – a network comprising three core routes, two running parallel to the A120 connecting the North West and North East development zones and SANG with the station and village centre (via the new bridge) and a third extending from the village centre to connect key features of the South zone (the schools and SANG).

A12 Widening Scheme – land safeguarded parallel to the A12 up to the A120 junction as defined on the withdrawn Development Consent Order.

Copford Strategic Gap – an area of open land the protection of which is vital to prevent the coalescence of the South development zone with Copford to its immediate east.

SANG – two locations in each of the North West and South zones of a similar strategic scale to meet the SANG specification requirements of the 2,500 homes strategy in full, both connected to the core active travel route network.

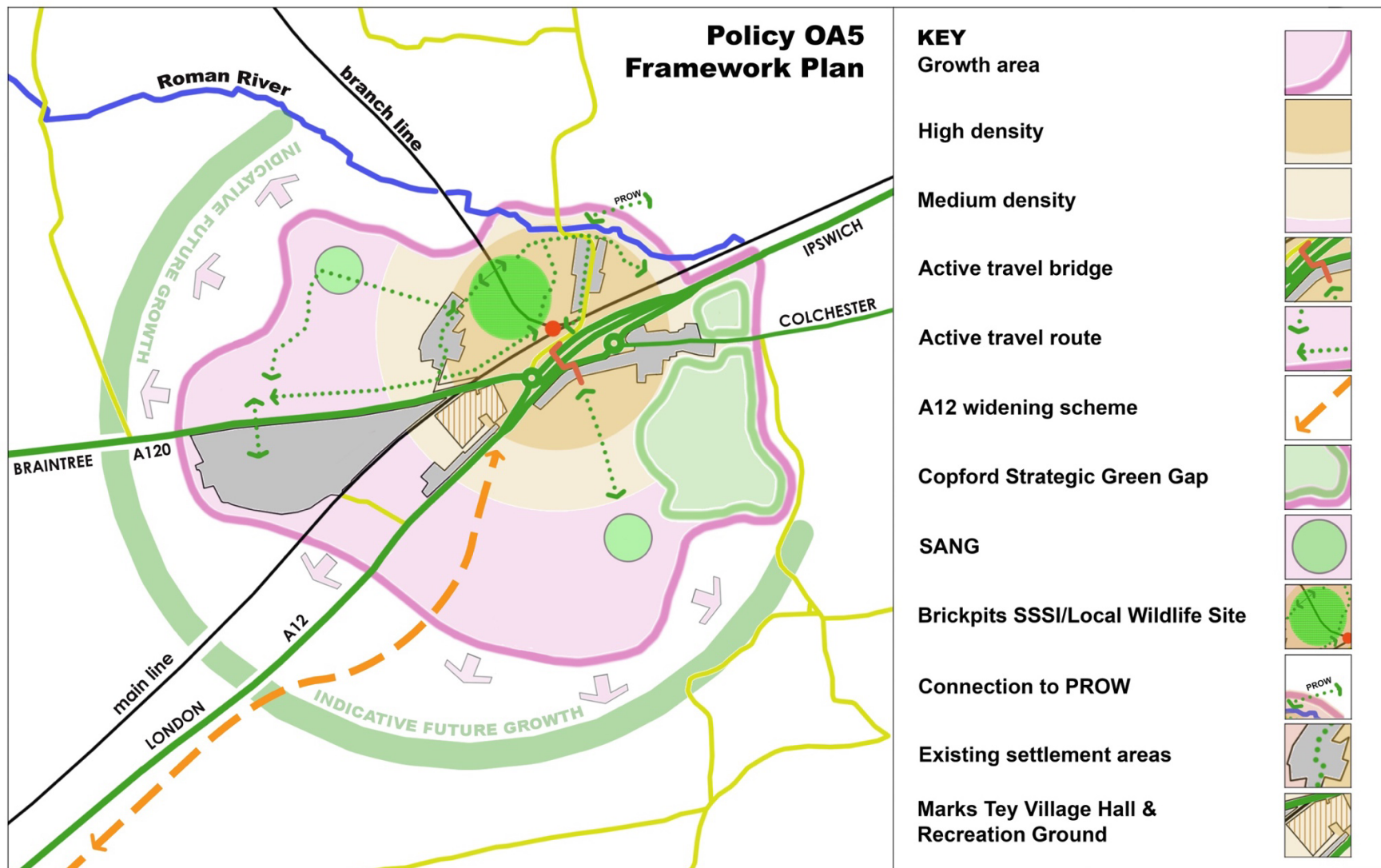
Brickpits SSSI/Local Wildlife Site – a major area of open space and woodland lying between the North West and North East zones either side of the railway branch line (with a pedestrian bridge under the line to connect them both), with some land having the potential to form a non-SANG public park.

Connections to PRow – the active travel route network either encompasses or adds to the limited existing Public Rights of Ways through the area, creating strategic connectivity between settlements beyond Marks Tey.

Existing Settlement Areas – comprising ‘old’ Marks Tey along Old London Road south of the A12, the much larger ‘new’ Marks Tey along on the A120, the historic settlement at Church Lane, the modern housing on North Lane and the industrial estates off Old London Road and North Lane between the A12 and A120 from the station to beyond Dobbies Lane.

Marks Tey Village Hall & Recreation Ground – the main community facilities serving the village although currently difficult to access from ‘new’ Marks Tey.

Indicative Future Growth – the areas beyond the Growth Area with some land in the same control and which has the potential to enable Marks Tey to continue to grow in a sustainable way after the plan period, but indicating that the settlement will reach a natural geographical limit of distance to centre around which a new countryside buffer may be created.



Plan J: Policy OA5 Framework Plan

5. APPRAISALS & ASSESSMENTS

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

5.1 As required, further sustainability appraisal of the evolving strategy and policy have been undertaken. The preferred strategy and draft policy were assessed in late July 2026, which concluded that overall, the policy significantly improves the sustainability performance of the Marks Tey Growth Area compared with the earlier site-only ("policy-off") assessment, largely because it introduces comprehensive infrastructure, environmental mitigation and placemaking requirements.

5.2 Other positive effects identified are:

- Housing (SA1): Effect improves from *uncertain minor positive* to significant positive because Policy OA5 explicitly provides for around 2,500 dwellings.
- Economic growth (SA3): Remains minor positive, reflecting delivery of approximately 18ha of employment land and integration of jobs and homes through the masterplanning process.
- Transport (SA4): Upgraded to significant positive due to the extensive transport package, including: strategic transport improvements; improved station access; active travel routes; a new or enhanced green bridge across the A12/A120; improved connections across the A12, A120 and railway; and wider sustainable travel and public transport measures.
- Services and facilities (SA6): Upgraded from *minor negative* to significant positive because the policy requires a new secondary school; two new primary schools with early years provision; and new and enhanced local centres across the growth area.
- Community, recreation and wellbeing (SA5): Remains minor positive due to strategic open space, recreation provision, local centres and community engagement requirements.

5.3 The appraisal also concludes that the policy framework substantially reduces several environmental concerns identified at site assessment stage:

- Historic environment (SA7): Improves from a stronger negative concern to an uncertain minor negative effect, reflecting requirements to protect and respond to heritage assets, including the Scheduled Monument.
- Biodiversity (SA8): Improves substantially from significant negative to negligible, due to at least 49ha of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG); three new parks; biodiversity enhancement and nature recovery measures; protection of Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI and Local Wildlife Site; woodland, hedgerow and pond protection; and requirements relating to overwintering birds.

- Landscape (SA9): Improves from uncertain minor negative to uncertain negligible, supported by the proposed Copford Strategic Green Gap; a concentration of higher-density development around the station; and measures to avoid settlement coalescence and maintain openness.

5.4 The appraisal also identifies two areas where significant concerns remain despite mitigation:

- Land use and agricultural land (SA2) – the policy promotes efficient land use through transit-oriented development and density-led masterplanning, but does not avoid the loss of greenfield land and Grade 2/3 agricultural land therefore a significant negative effect remains.
- Water environment (SA14) – the policy contains strong requirements regarding wastewater capacity, phasing and sewerage infrastructure, but does not fully address the risk of water resource contamination during construction and therefore the previously identified negative effects remain.

5.5 The first is an inevitable negative effect that cannot be mitigated. The second can be addressed along with other development proposals as the CLP and its infrastructure proposals are phased and delivered. Otherwise, there has been no need to further modify the strategy or Policy OA5 in response to the appraisal.

5.6 In summarising the implications of the appraisal for the subsequent masterplanning work, it proposes the following requirements are made:

- A genuinely transit-oriented form of development centred on the station.
- Strategic active travel links across the A12, A120 and rail corridor.
- Early delivery of schools, local centres and community infrastructure.
- The Strategic Green Gap and landscape framework.
- The full green infrastructure, SANG and biodiversity network.
- Robust heritage-led design around the Scheduled Monument and historic assets.
- Water management and phased infrastructure delivery.

5.7 It concludes that masterplanning and infrastructure delivery are critical. The policy transforms OA5 from a site with several potentially significant adverse effects into one that performs strongly against housing, transport, economic growth, services and biodiversity objectives, although significant concerns regarding loss of agricultural land and residual water impacts remain.

HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT

5.8 Central to the requirement of the strategy and policy to enable the Appropriate Assessment to conclude they will cause no significant harmful effects to the Essex Coast SAC is their proposals for delivering Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). This will be in addition to the other longstanding RAMS strategy mitigation measures.

5.9 The need to ensure the timely funding and delivery of qualifying SANG has been an important objective and component of the land budget model. The preferred strategy shows that there is suitable land available in two of the three development zones (North West and South) that can be delivered at the outset of each development phase. Housing schemes in the North East zone will secure sufficient capacity in the North West SANG, which will be within an 800m walking distance.

5.10 The masterplan will determine the precise location, specification (per the national guidelines) and timing of each SANG.

VIABILITY APPRAISAL

5.11 The preferred strategy has been subject to further viability testing to ensure its modified spatial, housing density and combined SANG and infrastructure requirements can be accommodated in a viable masterplan in due course.

5.12 It notes the higher cost and longer term maintenance commitment required of qualifying SANG than its conventional public open space equivalent. It also notes the higher cost of delivering a significant package of active travel measures than proposed in the draft CLP though the package is intended to avoid the likely substantial costs of major upgrades to the A12/A120.

5.13 The testing has concluded that the strategy should be viable if brought forward, funded and delivered through a comprehensive masterplan and with no further planning applications for major housing consented in the interim.

6. IMPLEMENTATION & MASTERPLANNING

6.1 The strategy is considered sufficiently robust to be found sound in principle in due course. The strategy can only be delivered through comprehensive masterplanning of the whole Growth Area and of each of its three development zones.

6.2 This work will also be necessary to respond to and incorporate ongoing strategy, modelling and evidence development by CCC and other stakeholders, including the land promoters. In particular, the work will take into account:

- The resolution of SANG locations, financing and delivery to reflect development phasing
- The agreement to the preferred location and the nature of employment land within the growth area to deliver the quantum required in the plan period
- The agreement to the preferred location for the proposed 'all-through' secondary school, primary school and early years centre in the South development zone, and the timing of its delivery
- The resolution of the detailed active travel routes as the access points and layouts of schemes within the three development zones are known and aligned as necessary
- The agreement of the specification and precise location of the active travel bridge over the A12, and the timing of its delivery
- The availability and planning of additional development land in the North East development zone off North Lane and around Marks Tey Station
- A clearer understanding of any need for modifications to Marks Tey Station to upgrade its passenger handling and/or service frequency capacity
- A clearer understanding of the combination of requirements for highways improvements and active travel and/or public transport service improvements, including the need for, and opportunity to deliver, a permanent or interim 'Park & Choose' facility
- Any success in lobbying for the re-instatement of the A12 widening scheme
- The agreement of a S106-based tariff to pool financial contributions for infrastructure and mitigation measure investment.

6.3 It is preferable for this masterplanning work to be undertaken as a joint collaboration between it, the land interests, infrastructure operators and the local communities. For that reason, it is considered the new Supplementary Plan provisions would be well-suited as a statutory and separately-examined platform. The draft Policy OA5 indicates that intent but there may be other, non-statutory means by which this exercise could be completed.

6.4 Whilst the masterplan may minimise the need for land interests to agree equalisation arrangements for the distribution of non-housing land uses and for the funding of shared infrastructure, it will not be possible to avoid it entirely. The timely delivery of SANG and active travel measures especially will require a form of S106-sourced, / CIL Growth Area 'tariff'.

6.5 CCC intends to continue to engage with stakeholders up to and through the examination of the Local Plan, including the local communities. Specifically, it will seek to agree a Memorandum of Understanding where appropriate including with the main land interests, with the potential to then agree Statements of Common Ground with the main statutory bodies prior to the Examination. It will also engage with the relevant Parish Councils to identify ways in which to maximise the benefits of the proposals for existing residents and businesses and to agree how they may best represent their communities in the masterplanning process.

6.6 In planning for the longer term future of the Marks Tey Growth Area post 2043, the masterplanning work will need to ensure that no land use, development, design or infrastructure component prejudices that future. The work completed so far for the CLP demonstrates that this can be avoided, given the configuration of the available land in the area of search and the proposed arrangement of uses and infrastructure across the three development zones.

6.7 CCC envisages that before the five year review stage of the CLP a full review of the delivery performance of the Marks Tey Growth Area strategy and masterplan will be completed. This may coincide with a future review of the CLP but need not if there is good reason.