

New Local Plan to 2041

**Draft Policy PP9:
North-East Colchester allocations**

**Review of landscape-related aspects
of representations**

for

Colchester City Council

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1 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 Colchester City Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan that will set the strategy for growth in Colchester for the period to 2043. As part of the process, the Council recently undertook a Regulation 18 consultation on its Preferred Options Local Plan. The consultation period closed on 14th January 2026.
- 1.2 The Preferred Options Local Plan includes a strategic allocation for North East Colchester under draft Policy PP9. The allocation proposes a significant area of growth to the north-eastern edge of the city, comprising residential development and associated infrastructure.
- 1.3 In response to the Regulation 18 consultation, the Council received a number of representations relating to Policy PP9, including detailed submissions from the St John's Residents Association and the Welshwood Park Residents Association. Both representations raise concerns regarding the proposed allocation and question the soundness of the Local Plan in relation to a range of matters, including landscape and visual effects, landscape character, and the potential for coalescence.

Commission

- 1.4 In May 2026, The Landscape Partnership was instructed by Colchester City Council to undertake an independent review of the landscape and visual matters raised within the representations submitted by the St John's Residents Association and Welshwood Park Residents Association.
- 1.5 The purpose of this technical note is to review the landscape and visual matters raised within the representations, including matters relating to landscape character, landscape value, visual amenity, settlement separation and coalescence. The note also advises whether the identified effects could be appropriately addressed through policy requirements, masterplanning principles and landscape mitigation measures.

Documents reviewed

- 1.6 The following documents have been reviewed:
 - Colchester Preferred Options Local Plan (Regulation 18), with particular reference to draft Policy PP9: North East Colchester
 - Representation submitted on behalf of St John's Residents Association by Carpenter Planning
 - Representation submitted on behalf of Welshwood Park Residents Association by Andrew Martin Planning
 - Colchester Landscape Character Assessment (2024)
 - Sustainability Appraisal (Preferred Options Local Plan)
 - Other relevant evidence base documents relating to landscape, green infrastructure and settlement pattern
 - Ordnance Survey mapping, aerial photography and publicly available environmental datasets.

Methodology

- 1.7 The review has been undertaken in accordance with the principles set out within Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 1/20: *Reviewing Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVAs)*.
- 1.8 The review has considered the landscape and visual matters raised within the representations, the evidence submitted in support of those matters, and the extent to which the conclusions reached are supported by available evidence and professional landscape judgement.
- 1.9 A desktop review of relevant planning policy, landscape evidence and environmental constraints was undertaken. The review considered the relationship of the proposed allocation to the adjoining settlements and countryside, and potential views towards the allocation. A site visit was also undertaken so as to understand the qualities of the landscape, and the nature of the existing views.
- 1.10 This technical note provides an independent professional review of landscape and visual issues raised through the Regulation 18 consultation process and considers whether those issues could be addressed through policy wording, masterplanning requirements or landscape mitigation measures.

Statement of competency

- 1.11 The Landscape Partnership is an environmental consultancy specialising in Landscape Architecture, Environmental Planning, Ecology and Arboriculture. Founded in 1986, the practice is registered with the Landscape Institute and is a member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.
- 1.12 The practice has extensive experience in landscape planning and environmental assessment, including the preparation of landscape character assessments, landscape sensitivity and capacity studies, green infrastructure strategies, and landscape and visual impact assessments. The Landscape Partnership regularly provides landscape planning advice to public and private sector clients in relation to Local Plans, development proposals and environmental assessments.
- 1.13 The practice has developed robust methodologies for assessing landscape character, landscape value, landscape sensitivity and the potential landscape and visual effects of development. Its staff provide clear and objective professional advice and regularly act as expert witnesses at planning inquiries and examinations.
- 1.14 This review was undertaken by Simon Murdoch CMLI, a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute with extensive experience in landscape planning and landscape assessment. The landscape-related matters raised in the representations have been considered on their merits, in the context of the emerging Local Plan, the Council's evidence base and relevant professional guidance. The findings of this review represent an impartial and independent professional judgement of the landscape and visual issues involved.

2 Planning policy context

Preferred Options Local Plan

- 2.1 Colchester City Council's new Local Plan will guide growth and development within the city to 2043. The Council consulted on the Preferred Options Local Plan (Regulation 18) between November 2025 and January 2026. The Preferred Options Local Plan follows the earlier Issues and Options consultation and is supported by a range of technical evidence base documents, including studies relating to landscape character, biodiversity, sustainability, heritage and infrastructure.
- 2.2 The emerging Local Plan identifies the proposed distribution of growth across the City and establishes policies for managing development and protecting environmental assets, including strategic housing allocations.
- 2.3 The PP9 North-East Colchester allocation area was selected following the Council's site assessment process, which tested alternative sites and boundaries against sustainability, infrastructure, environmental and deliverability criteria, with the final boundary reflecting the land considered most suitable for development and associated green infrastructure.

North East Colchester allocation

- 2.4 The policy area for Policy PP9 adjoins the north-eastern edge of Colchester, to the north-west and south east of the A137 Parsons Heath/Harwich Road and the Great Eastern Main Line.
- 2.5 The western portion is bound to the south-west by the residential area of St John's, and in particular the rear gardens of properties fronting St John's Road, Bullace Close and Green Lane. It extends north-eastwards around Bullock Wood (Ancient Woodland and SSSI) to the district boundary. Part of the eastern boundary of this portion of the allocation is formed by Harwich Road.
- 2.6 In doing so, it encompasses several larger, geometric fields currently in arable use and areas of scrub woodland. The land is generally flat, at or around 39m AOD. There are areas of farmstead type development fronting Parsons Heath, and further development within a wooded area in the north-eastern corner. The land is crossed by several public footpaths.
- 2.7 The eastern portion of the allocation is bound to the south and west by the large and well-wooded plots of properties within Welshwood Park. To the north and the east, it extends out to meet the district boundary. The southern corner abuts Welsh Wood (Ancient Woodland and Local Nature Reserve) and the rear gardens of properties fronting Bromley Road.
- 2.8 The land within this part of the allocation is also in use as arable agriculture. The field size varies from small to large and the individual fields are divided by hedges. The most western part is a continuation of the aforementioned raised plateau, at or around 35m AOD. The south-eastern portion falls relatively steeply down to c.10m AOD and the Salary Brook. Beyond the watercourse is Wall's Wood (Local Wildlife Site). Again, this part of the allocation is crossed by public footpaths, and these provide access to the wider countryside.
- 2.9 The Colchester Orbital long distance route takes a course around the city. In the vicinity of the allocation, it extends along Bullace Close, along the south-western edge of the allocation, then follows FP242 Colchester north-eastwards across the allocation to Bullock Wood, and south-eastwards to

meet Harwich Road. From Harwich Road, it follows FP111 Colchester south-eastwards along the northern edge of the allocation, and then south-westwards along FP114 Colchester into Welshwood Park. The route continues around the south-western edge of the allocation and eastwards along Bromley Road, before continuing southwards along the Salary Brook.

Policy PP9: North-East Colchester

- 2.10 Draft Policy PP9 proposes a "predominantly residential development community infrastructure, strategic open space and approximately 2,000 new dwellings..."
- 2.11 Of particular relevance to landscape and visual matters, the policy requires (as drafted for the Regulation 18 consultation):
- Provision of enhanced open space, comprising more than 10% of the allocation area, including at least one area of strategic open space together with areas of informal and incidental open space.
 - Habitat creation and biodiversity enhancement measures, including woodland creation, green infrastructure corridors and measures to strengthen ecological connectivity across the allocation.
 - The provision of appropriate buffers to Bullock Wood SSSI, Welsh Wood and Wall's Wood, together with protection and enhancement of the watercourse corridor and the biodiversity value of Salary Brook.
 - Protection of Ancient Woodland and the retention of mature trees and hedgerows within the site.
 - Landscape mitigation and integration measures, including tree screening and design measures intended to reduce the visual effects of development at the urban edge.
 - Protection and enhancement of the public rights of way network, including connections to the Colchester Orbital route and links between areas of woodland within and adjoining the allocation.
 - Conservation, and where appropriate enhancement, of the significance of heritage assets and their settings.
- 2.12 The policy also requires the preparation of a comprehensive masterplan for the entire allocation. The masterplan is required to be informed by an appropriate evidence base, prepared in collaboration with the Council and relevant infrastructure providers, and supported, where necessary, by parameter plans, design codes and other guidance. It should incorporate engagement with the local community and be informed by use of design review.

Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA)

- 2.13 The North-East Colchester allocation has been subject to extensive assessment and consultation over a number of Local Plan stages.
- 2.14 St Johns Road, Colchester (Site ID: 10256) and Land North of Bromley Road, Colchester (Site ID: 10616) were considered within the Stage 1 and 2 Site Assessment Reports.
- 2.15 Shaws Farm, Colchester (Site ID: 14040), Land at Bromley Road (Site ID: 14066) and Land East of Harwich Road, Colchester (Site ID: 13905) were assessed within the *Site Assessments Report Stages 1 and 2 for sites submitted at Regulation 18 Consultation* (May 2026).

- 2.16 It has not been possible to identify any SLAA site or site assessment that corresponds with the northernmost part of the draft allocation area.

Colchester Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.17 Land Use Consultants (LUC), on behalf of Colchester City Council, has prepared an update to the Colchester Landscape Character Assessment (CLCA), dated 2024, in order to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date strategic-scale landscape evidence base to underpin the emerging Local Plan. The study updates the Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment which was published in 2004.
- 2.18 The earlier classification of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) presented in the Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment, 2004, was reviewed and was largely retained with some minor amendments to boundaries. The CLCA 2024 identifies 6 No. LCTs and 28 No. LCAs.

3 Welshwood Park Residents Association Consultation Response

- 3.1 A representation has been submitted by Andrew Martin Planning on behalf of the Welshwood Park Residents Association. This review focuses on aspects of the representation that relate specifically to landscape.

Specific issues

- 3.2 The Welshwood Park Residents Association's (WPRA) main concerns relate to "Land North of Bromley Road" (Site ID: 10616). Specific landscape-related issues are discussed below.

Landscape value

Representation claim

- The land south of the railway line forms part of a valued landscape.
- Historic landscape designations demonstrate long-standing recognition of the area's landscape importance.
- The Salary Brook valley and associated landscape should be regarded as a valued landscape in NPPF terms.

TLP Review

- The appraisal has applied the guidance which is contained within the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value outside National Designations. The appraisal is based on the range of factors which are set out in the guidance, and has therefore used an appropriate methodology.
- The NPPF states that "planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by... protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)" (Paragraph 187).

- The landscape is not currently designated as a valued landscape at a national or local level.
- Landscape value has been considered at the District Level within the Colchester Landscape Character Assessment 2024 (Appendix A). The Assessment concluded that LCA A6 “has several sensitive attributes and values and overall is considered to have a high value.” The Council has therefore already considered landscape value. The high inherent landscape value judgement does not appear to be completely incompatible with development as development is mentioned within the landscape strategy for the area: “Any new development, particularly on the more open valley slopes in the north, should be carefully planned to prevent visual intrusion and preserve the rural setting to the east of Colchester.”
- The Colchester LCA considers inherent landscape value at a high level, but does not go through each of the factors listed within the TGN 02/21. Landscape value is a measure of the relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society on account of their landscape qualities. The level of society at which the landscape is important is described in this report as: National, County, District or Neighbourhood. National value refers to landscapes or features of national importance e.g. National Landscapes and National Parks. County level value refers to landscapes or features that are important at the county scale e.g. County Wildlife Sites. District level value refers to the most important and valuable landscapes or features of the district e.g. Local Wildlife Sites. Neighbourhood value refers to features which may be valued locally, but are otherwise commonplace or ordinary. TLP’s assessment of landscape value is presented below. The assessment area is based on the Salary Brook Valley.

Table 1: TLP’s assessment of Landscape Value

Factor	Assessment	Judgement
Natural heritage	The valley contains Ancient Woodlands at Welsh Wood, Walls Wood, Churn Wood and Home Wood. Walls Wood is identified as a County Wildlife Site and Welsh Wood and The Salary Brook are identified as Local Nature Reserves. Ancient Woodlands represent surviving semi-natural habitat. Green Infrastructure assets include the designated sites mentioned above, and the existing public rights of way.¹	District - County
Cultural heritage	The valley does not contain historic parks and gardens or designed landscape. Historically the valley comprised sparsely settled agricultural land. The valley provides a landscape setting to listed buildings at Moze Hall, Spring Valley Mill and Spring Valley Mill House, and Hill Farm.	Neighbourhood-District

¹ Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Final Report (2011)

Factor	Assessment	Judgement
	The valley includes some surviving 'pre-18 th century irregular fields' 'enclosed meadow' and 'ancient woodland.' Elsewhere field boundaries have been modified and the fields are classified as '20 th century agriculture.'	
Landscape condition	The water quality of the Salary Brook is assessed as moderate across most categories, but is high in regard to specific pollutants.² The existing Ancient Woodlands appear to be in good condition, but the WPRA representation has identified certain issues with Welsh Wood and the existing stream. The valley includes some dense hedges which are in good condition. One of the veteran trees (The Burnt Oak) has been subject to arson. The Essex Historic Landscape Characterisation Project indicates that field patterns have been partially altered. Urban development has intruded into the valley in places. The dual carriageway and reservoir to the north have altered the landscape pattern.	Neighbourhood
Associations	No known associations	No known value
Distinctiveness	The valley has a wooded character which makes it somewhat distinctive. The University of Essex towers also contribute to distinctiveness in a different way. Minor valleys are a fairly commonplace feature within East Anglia. The valley as a whole has been modified by various influences and is not therefore considered to be a particularly representative landscape.	District
Recreational	The existing footpaths and Welsh Wood provide undoubted recreational value for local residents in this part of Colchester. The valley also includes the Colchester Orbital which indicates wider recreational value.	Neighbourhood - District
Perceptual (scenic)	The valley has some scenic qualities but these are not exceptional. Greenstead, the Bellway development, and the University of Essex towers are visible within views.	Neighbourhood

² [Salary Brook | Catchment Data Explorer | Catchment Data Explorer](#)

Factor	Assessment	Judgement
Perceptual (wildness and tranquillity)	The woodlands provide some natural qualities, but this is countervailed by urban influences. The landscape is reasonably tranquil, but tranquillity declines in the north adjacent to the A120, and there is some low level noise from the city.	Neighbourhood

- The landscape has some valuable features that have been identified, but other elements of the landscape are more ordinary or commonplace. The eastern edge of Colchester extends into the Salary Brook Valley, the towers at the University of Essex are visible on the skyline, the northern part of the valley is crossed by a dual carriageway and the upper reaches of the valley have been flooded by Ardleigh reservoir. Whilst the landscape as a whole is considered to have community level value the allocation area relates to a more unspoilt part of the valley which is adjacent to an Ancient Woodland and contains dense hedges (which are valued features).
- It is not entirely clear if the high inherent landscape value identified in the Colchester Landscape Character Assessment equates to a valued landscape in NPPF terms. In our opinion, the Salary Brook Valley has value at the community level, but it is not considered intact enough to be a valued landscape at the district level.
- Historic landscape designations provide evidence that the landscape has been considered valuable in the past, but these designations pre-date the recent guidance. The emerging Local Plan uses a district-wide assessment of inherent landscape value rather than local landscape designations. Historic designations provide some context, but we consider that the up-to-date evidence on landscape value is more important than past designations.

Landscape Sensitivity

Representation claim

- The landscape south of the railway line is highly sensitive to residential development.
- Development would fundamentally alter the character of the Salary Brook valley side slopes and adjoining countryside.

TLP Review

- The appraisal states correctly that sensitivity is a product of landscape value and susceptibility to change.
- The appraisal adopts the definition of susceptibility which is set out in GLVIA3 i.e. “The ability of a defined landscape... to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences.” The appraisal states that “it seems quite logical to consider undue negative consequences to come from the compromise of identified landscape qualities, to the extent that devalues the landscape.” The appraisal then goes on to list specific landscape attributes and qualities which would be affected by the proposed development.

- Whilst we would acknowledge some sensitivity, it is considered that the value, susceptibility and sensitivity of the landscape have all been overstated in the representation. The eastern edge of Colchester already influences the character of the valley, which reduces sensitivity to this type of development. The existing vegetation also means that the effects of development would be relatively contained. Existing valued features would not be completely lost, and the sensitivity is therefore considered to be medium-high.

Mitigation

- Existing valued features e.g. the ancient woodland, existing hedgerows and veteran trees should be protected and retained with development setbacks and strategic open space.
- We agree that the land within the valley is more sensitive than the adjoining plateau, and this part of the allocation also includes the best hedgerows. Open space could potentially be placed within this part of the allocation to avoid the most sensitive areas.

Landscape Character Effects

Representation claim

- Development would result in significant adverse effects on local landscape character.
- The landscape forms part of the Salary Brook valley corridor and wider rural setting of Colchester.

TLP Review

- The land to the south of the railway falls within LCA A6: Ardleigh River Valley, which forms part of the Salary Brook valley. The Salary Brook valley is divided administratively between Colchester and Tendring.
- The proposed allocation area adjoins existing suburbs on the north-eastern edge of the city of Colchester (which include Welshwood Park).
- It is our opinion that the proposal would cause a high degree of change within the allocation area itself. This effect is to be expected where development is proposed on undeveloped sites, and is not unusual in itself.
- LCA A6 consists of two separate parts. The allocation area relates to the northern part of the LCA and this area would effectively become part of the urban area, and would be removed from the wider LCA. The larger southern part of the LCA would be unaffected by the proposed allocation, and the effects on character would therefore in our opinion be limited mainly to the allocation area itself.
- It is our opinion that effects on character can to some extent be moderated through design e.g. by retaining important landscape features.

Mitigation

- The existing woodlands should be protected with appropriate buffers and other mitigation measures, as recommended by an ecologist. The importance of the Ancient Woodlands as a landscape asset should also be recognised.

- The existing hedgerows should be protected and retained to minimise effects on these important features.
- Open space could potentially be placed within this part of the allocation (site 10616) and to avoid the most sensitive areas.

Coalescence and Settlement Separation

Representation claim

- Development would reduce separation between Colchester and the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community.
- The land south of the railway line should function as a strategic gap or green wedge.
- A country park designation should be used to prevent coalescence.

TLP Review

- The separation issue is slightly unusual in as much as the Garden Community has not yet been built. Nonetheless, it is understood that the intention is for the Garden Community to maintain a separate identity. When complete the proposed Garden Community will extend to the edge of the Salary Brook valley and this will place pressure on the remaining open land within the gap.
- Coalescence is defined as the process where separate elements merge together to form a single entity. Separate identities are maintained by keeping areas of undeveloped land between settlements. Separation has both physical and visual aspects (i.e. the open qualities of the land, and the way that the settlements are perceived).
- The Salary Brook valley forms a gap between Colchester and the proposed Garden Community. The existing separation distances between the edge of Colchester and the proposed Garden Community vary. In the southern part of the valley it is proposed that the west-facing slopes would be retained in an undeveloped form, and these would provide a narrow separation of around 350m width. In the middle part of the valley around Bromley Road the separate settlements are less well defined due to existing development, and it is difficult therefore to discern or measure a gap. The northern part of the valley does include open and undeveloped land between the existing and proposed settlements. The east-facing slopes currently consist of farmland. The west-facing slopes are heavily wooded, and the Garden Community does not propose development on these slopes (except for a school playing field). The east and west facing slopes together create a gap of around 700m.
- The eastern part of the proposed allocation area lies within the gap between the settlements and does, in our opinion, contribute to both physical and visual separation.
- The gap between the settlements is centred on the Salary Brook Valley. To be considered fully separate settlements should have areas of open countryside between them i.e. there should be an experience of leaving one settlement and travelling through the countryside before arriving at a different settlement. Assuming that the Garden Community is developed the Salary Brook valley will provide some separation, but there would be an element of intervisibility between the settlements, and the gap would be too narrow to have genuine rural qualities.

- The proposed allocation would bring the edge of Colchester closer to the Garden Community. The allocation would reduce the physical distance between the settlements considerably which would reduce the overall sense of separation. In terms of visual separation, some intervisibility is expected irrespective of the allocation, but the allocation would reduce the visual openness of the valley.
- The stream in the valley floor and the woodlands on the west-facing slopes would still provide some physical and visual separation, but the width of the gap would be narrowed to around 200m. The closest the settlements would come to merging would be in the north, opposite the proposed school playing fields, and we would recommend removing the development parcel to the east of the pipeline to maintain a gap.
- It is our opinion that, to truly be considered separate settlements, it is necessary to have some form of physical separation between them. Allocation would not cause the complete merging of settlements, but it would reduce the width of the physical gap between the settlements considerably.

Mitigation

- To maintain separation it is necessary to ensure that undeveloped land remains between the settlements, and this should be as extensive as possible.
- With allocation a narrow undeveloped corridor or around 200m width would remain. Mitigation should look to increase the width of this corridor.
- Sites 10616 and 14066 are the most sensitive in terms of separation, and open space could potentially be placed within these areas to minimise the effect on separation.
- Site 14066 is the most sensitive in respect of separation as it lies directly opposite the proposed school playing fields within the Garden Community. A strategic gap is recommended along the Salary Brook (in lieu of the proposed development to the east of the pipeline).

Salary Brook Valley Landscape

Representation claim

- The eastern slopes and Salary Brook corridor should remain undeveloped.
- The valley has landscape and environmental importance.
- The valley should form part of a larger strategic green infrastructure network.

TLP Review

- We agree that the valley at present provides an edge to Colchester. The proposed Garden Community will however separate the valley from the wider countryside, and the role and character of the valley will to some extent change. The southern part of the valley will change from agricultural use to a quasi-rural Country Park. The woodlands within the valley will be retained, but within a more urban context. The valley does in our opinion provide separation between Colchester and the proposed Garden Community, and also has a recreational function, and some recognised ecological value.

- In our opinion the existing landform, woodland and trees create visual containment, and this reduces the overall sensitivity.
- Green Infrastructure assets include the existing designated sites, priority habitats, and the public rights of way. We would therefore agree that the valley has some environmental importance. Allocation is not however necessarily incompatible with creating a larger Green Infrastructure network, and Green Infrastructure assets could to a large extent be retained.
- We agree that the valley is a recognisable feature of the landscape, and it is our understanding that the valley is intended to form a gap between the Colchester and the proposed Garden Community (i.e. it has a separation function).

Mitigation

- Protect and retain existing Green Infrastructure assets and look to maintain or improve the Green Infrastructure network.
- Look to implement BNG enhancements within the Salary Brook valley (rather than off site credits).

Welsh Wood, Wall's Wood and Woodland Setting

Representation claim

- Development would adversely affect the setting of Welsh Wood and Wall's Wood.
- Woodland landscapes contribute significantly to local character.
- Development could erode the landscape context of these features.

TLP Review

- The objections in relation to Welsh Wood relate primarily to ecological concerns which are outside the scope of this report.
- Welsh Wood lies at the edge of the existing urban area and its landscape setting is formed by residential suburbs and school playing fields to the west, and open fields to the east. The adjoining fields provide a connection to the wider countryside and the Salary Brook corridor, and give the wood a semi-rural setting.
- Allocation would give the wood an essentially urban setting, although there would still be corridors of open space adjoining the wood. Housing would sit between the wood and the Salary Brook, though some form of connection based on the existing stream and hedgerow would remain. In our judgement then, there would be an adverse effect on the landscape setting of the wood. The setting is however already semi-urban.

Mitigation

- The effects on the setting of the wood can, in our opinion, be partially reduced by providing appropriate buffers and landscape corridors.

Public Rights of Way and Recreational Landscape

Representation claim

- The area provides recreational and landscape value for local residents.
- Development would alter the experience of users of the rights of way network.

TLP Review

- The existing recreational landscape resource consists of footpaths Colchester 111, 113, 114, and 115. It is also stated in the representation that there are informal paths, but these are not by right. The footpaths follow existing tracks / the edges of fields, and would be retained within the proposed allocation. We therefore agree that the area provides recreational value for local residents.
- The Masterplan Framework prepared by the site promoters shows that the existing footpaths would be retained within corridors of open space, and they would continue to provide recreational opportunities. Allocation would create a more developed context, which would change the experience of users, but this could in our opinion be offset to some extent by new routes on the edge of the development, along the Salary Brook for example.
- New cycling opportunities would be introduced, and there would be more access to the Salary Brook corridor. There would also be opportunities to create circular routes. Facilities such as playgrounds would open up different recreational opportunities. In our opinion then there are certain potential benefits which to some extent offset the negative effects on the existing public rights of way.

Mitigation

- Retain existing footpaths within landscape corridors and ensure that these continue to provide attractive walking routes.
- Include strategic open space on the edges of the development with new pedestrian paths.
- Introduce additional paths and look to create circular routes.

Capacity and Deliverability of the Allocation

Representation claim

- The constraints identified within the landscape appraisal indicate that the site cannot accommodate the proposed quantum of development.
- The allocation should be reduced or supported by parameter plans demonstrating deliverability.

TLP Review

- The landscape appraisal within the representations identifies the Salary Brook valley as a valued landscape which “should not be developed.” The value of the landscape has been discussed in more detail above. The Landscape Character Assessment work which has been undertaken to support the new Local Plan judges that the landscape has high inherent landscape value, but this does not in itself rule out the possibility of development. The higher value of the Salary Brook valley which has been established in the Colchester LCA should be given appropriate weight in decision-making, but this does not necessarily create a constraint on the developable area.

- In our opinion the landscape does not present an absolute constraint to development, but we do consider the valley to be the more sensitive part of the allocation area due to its role in providing separation, its mature hedges, scenic qualities, and relative tranquillity. We would therefore recommend that the part of the allocation in Salary Brook Valley should be maintained if possible as open space within the wider allocation. This area will be defined through masterplanning.

Mitigation

- Concerns over capacity and deliverability can to some extent be addressed through appropriate masterplanning by for example retaining the most sensitive areas as open space and establishing appropriate densities.

4 St John's Residents Association Consultation Response

Overview

- 4.1 St John's Residents Association's (SJRA) representation has been compiled by Carpenter Planning, and is presented in the form of a report, undated.
- 4.2 The representation is submitted in objection to the inclusion of St John's Fields (Site ID 10256) in Preferred Options Draft Local Plan, Policy PP9. In particular, it objects to the inclusion of the land identified in the accompanying Appendices 1 and 2, for housing or any infrastructure, other than designated public open space, green infrastructure, or the net gain element of the overall development allocation.
- 4.3 Representation Appendix 2 sets out the area of particular interest to the SJRA objection.
- 4.4 This review focuses on aspects of the representation that relate specifically to effects of any future development on the character of the landscape, including coalescence, and visual amenity. These matters, together with a considered response, are set out below.

Specific issues

- 4.5 SJRA objects to the inclusion of land at St John's Fields in Policy PP9.

Landscape character effects

Representation claim

- Development would conflict with the published landscape strategy for LCA B7 - Langham Farmland Plateau.
- Development would result in the loss of rural landscape character.
- Allocation is inconsistent with the Landscape Character Assessment.
- The allocation would change the experience of approaching Colchester from the east.

TLP Review

- The representation correctly identifies that the allocation lies within LCA B7 Langham Farmland Plateau. The proposal relates to a detached part of LCA B7 which directly adjoins the existing urban edge.
- The allocation area itself would take on predominantly urban characteristics and would effectively be removed from LCA B7. The proposal would have no effect on the larger part of LCA B7 - which lies to the north, and the effects on character would in our opinion be limited mainly to the allocation area itself. We agree that development would cause a loss of rural landscape character within the site itself, but this is not an unusual or exceptional effect, and does not preclude allocation.
- The landscape strategy for the LCA does not preclude development. The landscape strategy states that “Development should be sensitively integrated into the landscape using appropriate boundary treatments. Visually intrusive and incongruous development should be avoided, particularly in the north to protect the landscape quality and tranquillity of the Dedham Vale National Landscape.” This suggests that the southern part of LCA B7 is less sensitive to development (which we would concur with). As long as development is not visually intrusive or incongruous, and is sensitively integrated into the landscape using appropriate boundary treatments then it could be consistent with the landscape strategy for this area. We understand the landscape strategy to be saying that any development should have appropriately designed edges and boundaries, so that it does not appear out of place. Development should also, in our interpretation, be consistent with the established styles which are present in the LCA.

Mitigation

- Retention of landscape structure (i.e. existing trees and hedgerows).
- Extend woodland cover as per the recommendations in the LCA.
- Ensure that the proposed development has a vegetated edge.
- Development to have appropriate architectural style which accords with the local character.

Visual Effects and Visual Amenity

Representation claim

- Existing residents overlook open countryside which would be replaced by housing.
- Development would alter local views and visual amenity.

TLP Review

- There would inevitably be some visual effects which are associated with the proposed development. The row of properties which directly overlook the site would experience a large change to views, but there are opportunities to reduce the effects by creating an appropriate boundary (see below).
- The representation has highlighted views from adjoining residential properties and from the public footpaths which cross the site, as well as from the A137 Fox Street / Parsons Heath, and these would be main visual receptors.

- It is agreed that there would be a high degree of change to views from within the site or immediately adjoining it, where these are present. The scale of change from beyond the site boundaries would be much more limited, and the visual effects would be localised.

Mitigation

- Set back any new development from the southern boundary (adjacent to existing properties).
- Introduce structural landscape planting on the southern edge of the allocation adjacent to the existing properties to partially mitigate the effect on views.
- Building heights should be limited to 1-2 storeys on the southern edge of the development.

Settlement Separation and Coalescence

Representation claim

- Development would reduce the separation between Colchester and the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community.
- The allocation would contribute to coalescence and loss of settlement identity.

TLP Review

- The issue of separation has been discussed in relation to the Welshwood Park representations above. Notwithstanding this, it is worth noting that the St Johns Fields part of the allocation makes a more limited contribution to separation than the Land north of Bromley Road. Development in this parcel would not in itself cause any narrowing of the gap between Colchester and the Garden Community, though the allocation as a whole is likely to have an effect on separation.

Mitigation

- Mitigation should look to maximise the width of the undeveloped gap.
- Sites 10616 and 14066 are the most sensitive in terms of separation and open space could potentially be placed within these areas to minimise the effect on separation.

Bullock Wood and its Landscape Setting

Representation claim

- Development would adversely affect the setting of Bullock Wood.
- The surrounding land acts as a buffer to the woodland.
- Existing tranquillity and dark landscape conditions would be eroded.

TLP Review

- The objections in relation to Bullock Wood relate primarily to ecological concerns, which are beyond the scope of this report.
- We anticipate that allocation would introduce additional light sources, and it is recommended that the Council seek ecological advice on this issue.

- Bullock Wood lies at the edge of the existing urban area and its landscape setting is formed by residential development on a former factory site to the west, St John's playing field and an existing arable field to the south, and further arable fields to east.
- The existing field does provide a buffer to the wood, but the whole width of this buffer is not necessarily required to protect the wood.
- Ancient Woodlands are often, in our opinion, a defining landscape feature with a strong influence on character, structure, setting and sense of time-depth. The existing Ancient Woodland has an important relationship with the agricultural surrounds, and the existing setting provides context and history.

Mitigation

- It should be recognised that the Ancient Woodland is a very long established feature of the landscape which contributes to a sense of time-depth. Measures should therefore be taken to protect this important feature.
- Effects on the Ancient Woodland can to some extent be reduced by introducing appropriate buffers and landscape corridors.
- The allocation should include dark corridors and sensitive edge treatment adjacent to the Ancient Woodland.
- We noted during the site survey that Bullock Wood does contain some non-native species such as Spanish chestnut and cherry laurel. The woodland has also suffered in places from the creation of bike jumps. It is not known who owns the wood, but opportunities to improve its condition by removing non-native species should be sought.

Tranquillity and Dark Skies

Representation claim

- Development would increase lighting.
- Development would erode existing tranquillity.
- Urbanising influences would affect the rural fringe.

TLP Review

- Some understanding of the existing tranquillity can be gained from DEFRA's Road Noise data.³ In terms of road noise the allocation area generally falls within the 40 to 50db range which indicates some low-level road noise, and this was confirmed during the site visit. Further to this there is also some intermittent noise from the railway. In rural areas, away from roads, the decibel levels fall below 40db, and the allocation area therefore is not especially tranquil.
- Whilst allocation would cause urbanisation, the allocation area is already described in the representation as an urban fringe landscape i.e. there is already some influence from the adjoining urban area on this landscape. In our opinion allocation would certainly extend the urban

³ [Road Noise - All Metrics - England Round 4](#)

area, but we do not view the existing landscape as particularly valuable or sensitive. In particular we would note that the urban fringe is already apparent, and St Johns Fields are visually well contained by trees and woodland. Whilst there would be a high degree of change within the allocation area itself the fact that the site is adjacent to the existing urban area reduces the overall degree of effect, in our opinion.

Mitigation

- The development should include dark corridors as necessary.
- Ensure that the proposed development has a vegetated edge so as to limit the urbanising influences of development.

Public Rights of Way and Recreational Landscape

Representation claim

- St John's Fields functions as valued local open countryside.
- Public footpaths contribute to recreational enjoyment and local quality of life.

TLP Review

- The existing footpaths provide easy and convenient access to the field to the north of Green Lane and there is therefore an opportunity to walk in the countryside adjoining the city. Footpath 242 terminates on Harwich Road and there is an opportunity to continue walking via footpath Colchester 111 towards the Salary Brook valley.
- The Masterplan Framework would remove public footpaths Colchester 108/109 and 110. Footpath 110 is not retained within the submitted Masterplan Framework (although this is a draft submitted by site promoters and is not endorsed by the Council), but a pedestrian /cycle link is included on the southern site boundary which would provide a somewhat similar route. The Masterplan Framework indicates that recreational opportunities would still be available within the proposed allocation. We acknowledge that the character of the existing footpaths would change, and residents would have to travel further to reach the countryside. It would still be possible to walk via footpaths Colchester 242 and 111 to the countryside, and some new pedestrian routes would be created within the proposed allocation. In our judgement there would be some overall negative effects on access to the countryside which should be taken into consideration.

Mitigation

- Retain existing routes within areas of landscape corridors and ensure that these continue to provide attractive walking routes.
- Provision of new paths within the proposed allocation, creation of circular routes.

Sustainability Appraisal Findings Relating to Landscape

Representation claim

- The Sustainability Appraisal identifies negative landscape effects.
- The SA demonstrates the site performs poorly.

TLP Review

- The allocation area is located within an area identified as having high and medium inherent landscape value in the Landscape Character Assessment work undertaken in support of the new Local Plan. The Sustainability Appraisal therefore records an “uncertain significant negative effect” on the landscape. Policy PP9 requires screening measures at the edge of the site to provide mitigation and integration with the landscape. the protection of ancient woodland adjacent to the site and retention of mature trees and hedgerows within the site will help to ensure that development is sensitively integrated to reflect and reinforce the area's character, tranquillity, and visual quality. As such, given the mitigation set out in the policy, an improved uncertain minor negative effect is recorded in relation to SA objective 9.
- The Sustainability Appraisal concludes that there is potential to reduce the scale of the landscape effect. It is our opinion that some weight should be given to the effect on the landscape (which would be negative), but this is just one of several topics which have to be considered together.

Historic Landscape Character and Heritage Setting

Representation claim

- Development would affect the historic rural landscape associated with Bullock Wood.
- Development would alter the historic landscape framework.

TLP Review

- Bullock Wood and the historic landscape framework are not identified heritage assets, but some consideration will nonetheless be given to the historic nature of the existing landscape features. Bullock Wood is identified as Ancient Woodland and is therefore a historic landscape feature. The proposed allocation directly adjoins the Ancient Woodland and we do anticipate that there would be effects on its setting. The existing field boundaries were already established in 1881 and they too form historic landscape features. The straight field boundaries are likely to be the product of parliamentary enclosures, and are not therefore particularly ancient or rare. The hedgerows would be retained within the proposed allocation.

5 Recommendations

Valued features

- 5.1 Existing valued features e.g. the ancient woodland, existing hedgerows and veteran trees should be protected and retained with development setbacks, buffers and strategic open space.
- 5.2 The existing hedgerows should be protected and retained to minimise effects on these important features.
- 5.3 The existing woodlands which adjoin the allocation area should be protected with appropriate buffers and other mitigation measures, as recommended by an ecologist.

- 5.4 The policy wording should ensure that Ancient Woodland is recognised as a landscape asset in its own right, rather than only as an ecological constraint e.g. *Development proposals should conserve the landscape role of the adjacent ancient woodland, recognising its contribution to landscape character, landscape structure, visual containment, settlement setting and landscape time-depth. The design and disposition of development should respond to these qualities and maintain the woodland's contribution to the experience of the surrounding landscape.*
- 5.5 The development should include dark corridors as necessary.

Strategic Gap

- 5.6 The width of the remaining undeveloped gap between the edge of Colchester and the proposed Garden Community should be maximised. With allocation a narrow undeveloped corridor or around 200m width would remain. Mitigation should seek to increase the width of this corridor.
- 5.7 Sites 10616 and 14066 are the most sensitive in terms of separation, and open space could potentially be placed within these areas to minimise the effect on separation.
- 5.8 Site 14066 is the most sensitive in respect of separation as it lies directly opposite the proposed school playing fields within the Garden Community. A strategic gap is recommended on part of this site, along the Salary Brook (in lieu of the proposed development to the east of the pipeline).

Green Infrastructure

- 5.9 Protect and retain existing Green Infrastructure assets and look to maintain or improve the Green Infrastructure network. Look to implement BNG enhancements within the Salary Brook valley (rather than off site credits).
- 5.10 Retain existing footpaths within landscape corridors and ensure that these continue to provide attractive walking routes. Include strategic open space on the edges of the development with new pedestrian paths. Provide additional paths within allocation, and create circular routes.
- 5.11 If there are opportunities to improve the condition of Bullock Wood by removing non-native species these should be taken.

Landscape character

- 5.12 Extend woodland cover as per the recommendations in the LCA.
- 5.13 Ensure that the proposed development has a vegetated edge.
- 5.14 Development to have appropriate architectural style which accords with the local character.

Visual effects

- 5.15 Set back any new development from the southern boundary (adjacent to Green Lane and Bullace Close). Introduce structural landscape planting on this boundary to reduce the effect on views from neighbouring properties. Limit building heights on this edge to 1-2 storeys.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 5.16 Give appropriate weight to the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal (which records a minor negative effect on the landscape with mitigation in place).

6 Proposed Policy wording

~~Proposed deletions shown thus~~

Proposed additions shown thus

Policy PP9: North-East Colchester

In addition to the infrastructure and mitigation requirements identified in Policy ST 7 and subject to compliance with all other relevant policies, development will be supported on land within the area identified on the policies map which provides:

- a) predominantly residential development including community infrastructure, strategic open space and approximately 2,000 new dwellings of a mix and type of housing to meet evidenced needs which is compatible with surrounding development;
- b) Safe and suitable site access to required highway design standards. The point of vehicular access is to be agreed with the Highway Authority and it will need to be demonstrated that the proposal would not be detrimental to highway capacity and safety;
- c) Provision of active and sustainable travel and passenger transport;
- d) Provision of a new local centre to serve the new and existing local community, this may include provision of retail, commercial and community facilities at an appropriate scale, relevant to the role and function of a local centre and the communities it is intended to serve.
- e) 'Enhanced Open Space' as shown on the Policies Map substantively in excess of 10% of the allocation area must be provided as open space. ~~This should include at least one area of strategic open space and multiple areas of less formal and more incidental open space.~~ **The strategic open space shall protect and reinforce existing landscape structure, maximise the width of the undeveloped corridor between Colchester and the proposed Garden Community, safeguard the setting of Salary Brook and adjacent Ancient Woodland, retain and enhance existing Public Rights of Way, and provide opportunities for habitat creation, informal recreation and active travel.**
- f) As a strategic site, there is potential for a range of habitat creation measures which should be maximised with regard to the Salary Brook strategic biodiversity area as defined on the policies map. Onsite BNG measures should focus on woodland creation to expand and buffer ~~the~~ **Bullock Wood** SSSI, enhanced connectivity through creation of a green corridor between designated sites, buffers to Welsh Wood and Wall's Wood LoWS, gain in watercourse units, and delivery of a range of habitat creation measures including acid grassland;
- g) Biodiversity mitigation measures must include a buffer to Bullock Wood SSSI, the size of the buffer must be informed by a survey. The watercourse within the site must be protected and buffered. Opportunities should be taken to secure improved management to the SSSI to include protection from recreational disturbance, and connections between the SSSI and Welsh Wood and Wall's Wood LoWS;

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- h) Protection of water quality within Salary Brook water course and the conservation and enhancement of its biodiversity value;
 - i) ~~Adequate protection of the adjacent Ancient Woodland, and together with the retention and protection of existing hedgerows, mature trees and veteran trees and hedgerows within the site.~~ **Development shall provide appropriate buffers and other measures to deter access in accordance with advice from Natural England, and shall recognise the contribution of Ancient Woodland to landscape character, settlement setting, visual containment and historic landscape character, as well as its biodiversity value;**
 - j) ~~Tree screening, muted colours and non-reflective surfaces at the edge of the site~~ **Structural landscape planting shall be used to create a robust vegetated edge to the development** to help provide mitigation and integration within the landscape;
 - k) An active travel plan to be agreed with the Council which ensures site wide active travel connectivity including links beyond the site;
 - l) ~~Connectivity with existing Public Rights of Way including connection and enhancement to the Colchester Orbital and connections between the areas of woodland within and adjacent to the site.~~ **Development shall provide a connected network of multifunctional Green Infrastructure incorporating retained Public Rights of Way, new circular walking routes, green corridors and accessible strategic open spaces, maintaining attractive recreational links both within the site and to the surrounding countryside. Retain and enhance connections to the Colchester Orbital (by providing better wayfinding for example);**
 - m) Development must conserve, and where appropriate, enhance the significance of heritage assets (including any contribution made by their settings). Designated heritage assets close to the allocated site includes four Grade II Listed Buildings as per the stage 1 HIA;
 - n) Liaise with ECC as the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority on mineral and waste matters. A Minerals Resource Assessment as part of any planning application. Should the viability of extraction be proven, the mineral shall be worked in accordance with the scheme/masterplan as part of the phased delivery of non-mineral development;
 - o) Development must discharge attenuated surface water to a receiving waterbody and not to the combined sewer network, unless it can be demonstrated that there is no other option;
 - p) Demonstrate adequate capacity for managing wastewater including proposed phasing requirements or alternative solutions to the satisfaction of the Council and Anglian Water;
 - q) A range of measures in addition to prioritising SuDs (Policy EN8) and water efficiency measures to reduce the risk ~~on~~**of** impact on the WRC capacity as a result of planned growth including:
 - i. Removal of unrequired network flows;
 - ii. Targeted education to include new residents of the development;
 - iii. Reduction in the demand for potable water.
 - r) Any site specific infrastructure requirements from the IDP (to include education provision (2.1ha site for Primary school and Early Years), highway mitigation, water and wastewater and specific community / open space **and play** provision);
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- s) Before granting planning consent, wintering bird surveys will be undertaken at the appropriate time of year to identify any offsite functional habitat. In the unlikely event that significant numbers are identified, development must firstly avoid impacts. Where this is not possible, development must be phased to deliver habitat creation and management either on or off-site to mitigate any significant impacts. Any such habitat must be provided and fully functional before any development takes place which would affect significant numbers of SPA birds.

Proposals for the allocated site will only be supported where they accord with a comprehensive masterplan in relation to the entire allocation, that has been agreed with the Council prior to submission of any planning application. The masterplan must be of sufficient detail to ensure optimal placemaking and housing delivery outcomes for the allocation and should be informed by an appropriate evidence base. The masterplan should be developed in collaboration with the Council, and relevant infrastructure providers, it should incorporate engagement with the local community and be informed by use of design review. Where appropriate and necessary, the masterplan shall be supported by parameter plans, design codes and/or guidance.