



DEVELOPING A LANDSCAPE FOR THE FUTURE

A Strategy for Landscape Planning of Development Sites within Colchester Borough

Major Developments Team
Commercial Services

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Vision for Landscape Development in Colchester Borough

Our *Vision* is for the Borough to be recognised as having the optimal policy framework and service delivery strategy for successful landscape development planning, design and delivery within the East of England and that this planning fully embraces the spirit of localism through the ideals of leadership of place and its advocacy of integrated community involvement.

Introduction

To deliver this ambition Colchester Borough Council intends to ensure it remains a leading practitioner of best practice in landscape planning and design. We intend that this will be delivered through a partnership between professional practitioners and local community involvement. In tandem, it requires this best practice be reflected within evolving development in the Borough in order to help deliver the aspirations of the wider community; including business interests.

Our overriding aim is to proactively lead on securing the highest standards of landscape planning within the development process associated with the future expansion of the Borough, in order to positively shape and enhance the landscape overall and by influencing its subsequent practical good management benefiting the community in the long term.

In order to meet this Vision, Colchester Borough Council will develop a strategic overview of how to best approach landscape planning, but is also seeking to actively position the Authority as an enabler of this Vision.

Delivering a Strategy to meet the Vision

Colchester Borough Council has developed this Strategy to chart a course for planning Colchester's landscape over the lifecycle of the Local Plan Schedule (adoption schedule for 2016/2017), when it is anticipated that the East of England will grow faster than any other region in the country with Colchester as one of its, and the nations, fastest growing local authority areas.

This Strategy deals essentially with the landscape planning carried out by the Council's Planning Services when addressing the practical expansion of the Borough. This landscape design planning ideally starts at the earliest stages of planning individual development sites selection and extends through to the detailed landscape design stages and the securing of its implementation and future management. This design process is informed by the Borough's landscape characterisation, principally through reference to it's:

1. Landscape Character Assessment, the principal landscape characterisation document, which analyses and identifies distinct countryside character areas within the Borough, each of which it supports through objectives and planning and management guidelines, which can feed directly into the landscape design process to help meet those objectives; link - [http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/4503/Evidence-Base-Documents%20ref%20CBC/EB025 - ref CBC/EB/035](http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/4503/Evidence-Base-Documents%20ref%20CBC/EB025-ref%20CBC/EB/035), CBC/EB/036, CBC/EB/037 and CBC/EB/037b;
2. Townscape Character Assessment, which analyses and identifies distinct character areas within the Boroughs principal urban conurbations, including the identification of significant landscape features within them, which can be used as reference points within the landscape design process, thereby allowing for the protection and enhancement of the urban landscape framework; link - <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/4503/Evidence-Base-Documents> - CBC/EB/025
3. Historic Landscape Assessment, which identifies the Boroughs historic environment character areas and historic features within them, which can be used as a reference point within the landscape design process, thereby helping facilitate the protection and enhancement of those features; link - [http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/4503/Evidence-Base-Documents - ref CBC/EB/153](http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/4503/Evidence-Base-Documents-ref%20CBC/EB/153)
4. Green Infrastructure Strategy, which principally identifies potential improvements to the existing green infrastructure within Colchester's growth areas, thereby allowing the landscape design process to take account of the infrastructure and directly influence improvements to it; - link - <http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/6092/New-Evidence-Base-Documents--Studies>).

Sensitive landscape planning is and will remain part of the glue that is required to keep the rapid expansion of Colchester Borough together. It is vital therefore that the Council makes sure an informed, locally focused and inclusive approach is employed to continue to drive forward this landscape aspect of the Borough's planning. We will endeavour to deliver resilient and robust landscapes that remain true to local character and landscape traditions. We intend that our existing and future residents will be proud of their Borough as an attractive environment in which to live, work and invest, thereby helping to ensure it continues, through the ongoing development of locally inspired landscapes, to remain as somewhere all can enjoy and its residents will be proud to be part of as it matures.

Policy context for Landscape Strategy of Development Sites:

The National Planning Policy Framework (2012) has relaxed planning controls particularly in rural areas. It places greater emphasis on rural regeneration permitting a wider range of businesses in the countryside and supports the delivery of market housing on Rural Exceptions sites to increase the delivery of affordable housing in rural towns and villages. Proposals for new or expanded rural businesses or rural housing development proposals however have to be considered in the context of locality and context which includes local landscape considerations to ensure proposals are as sustainable as possible. Importantly, as well, the NPPF highlights the need for development to accord with policies in current local plans.

There are a number of adopted policies in Colchester's Local Plan documents (Core Strategy and Development Policies) that set out how landscape issues need to be considered as part of planning applications.

The key Core Strategy policies are ENV1 and ENV2.

The Coastal Protection Belt referred to in ENV1 plays an important role in protecting the undeveloped and open character of the Borough's coastline. Policy ENV1 seeks to further protect tracts of countryside, and rural character by restricting inappropriate developments outside settlement boundaries and where developments are being proposed in rural areas siting, scale and design are important considerations in terms of protecting landscape character.

Policy ENV2 supports development within settlement boundaries that respect the character of the locality. This policy also supports small scale leisure, business and tourism developments outside settlements boundaries and permits affordable

housing on Rural Exception Sites adjacent to settlement boundaries. In both cases design and scale are important factors in new development proposals to help protect landscape character. Policy ENV2 highlights the important role the Landscape Character Assessment plays in shaping landscape enhancement proposals put forward as part of development schemes.

Protecting landscape character is a key objective of Development Policy DP1. (Design and Amenity) To comply with this policy all developments must be designed to a high standard, and respect and enhance landscape setting and local character by being of an appropriate scale, height, and mass. Developments are also expected to enhance the existing sense of place and protect and enhance those features that help define local landscape character

Policy DP9 (Employment Uses in the Countryside) is permissive towards employment in the open countryside, however any such schemes must be of a scale appropriate to a rural location and prevent harm to rural character.

Policy DP15 (Retention of Open Space and Indoor Sports Facilities) and DP16 (Private Amenity Space and Open Space Provision for New Residential Development) provide guidance on ensuring the high quality and supply of accessible private and public open space and the retention of important green spaces that help define local character.

Policy DP21 (Nature Conservation and Protected Lanes) highlights the need for developments to conserve or enhance biodiversity; avoid harm to designated sites; and to protect historic landscape features.

Policy DP22 (Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) seeks to ensure the protection of the unique and distinctive landscape character of the Dedham Vale as well as the qualities for which it has been designated .

Policy DP23 (Coastal Areas) sets forth an integrated approach to coastal management. It seeks to protect the undeveloped areas of coast in the Borough and also conserve maritime character by restricting inappropriate development that would not help preserve this character

Policy DP25 (Renewable Energy) includes guidance on addressing the impact of renewable energy proposals on the surrounding landscape character.

Objectives:

The following objectives have been identified as crucial to the implementation of our Vision:

1. To incorporate this strategic landscape planning approach both within and beyond the Council's targeted regeneration areas, including any future urban fringe land adopted as an offset against development, in order to help manage the expansion of Colchester in such a way as to achieve a high quality, well designed, sustainable, naturally bio-diverse and productive environment.
2. To ensure the landscape elements of new development seamlessly weave together identified social & economic considerations with existing and perceived environmental factors. We will ensure that through this process development respects existing or underlying historic landscape character; both within the site and its wider landscape context.
3. To encourage a clearer understanding of best landscape planning practice and design with stakeholder groups through discussion, promotion and education. The development process will thus promote both local aspirations and professional best practice in landscape planning and design.
4. To secure a high standard of landscape design, implementation and management within all development. Thereby facilitating a high quality and attractive landscape, the professional implementation and monitoring of landscape schemes and the influencing of good practice in landscape management within new development and where possible the wider landscape.

Actions:

The following actions are required in order to ensure a strategic approach to landscape design and implementation can be successfully incorporated within the future development of the Borough, allowing the Priorities identified to drive forward and help achieve our Vision:

Objectives	What will be achieved	How will it be achieved	When will it be achieved	Who will lead
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<p>1</p> <p>2</p> <p>3</p> <p>4</p>	<p>A balanced approach to landscape design based on a robust strategy.</p> <p>A high standard of landscape design within new development.</p>	<p>‘Strategy for Landscape Planning of Development Sites within Colchester Borough’ developed to set the standards for landscape planning. To be approved by the Local Plan Committee.</p> <p>Where landscape is a key consideration the Council's Landscape Planning Officer will be involved by the Planning Officer at all relevant stages of the planning process. This is to ensure that the landscape element of any development proposals are fully recognised and considered. Once involved they will go on to act as consultant to the Planning Officer, advising them throughout the planning process on landscape issues.</p> <p>Specifically referencing relevant national policies/guidelines and the Council's Local Plan policies, to help negotiate optimum landscape benefits from development proposals. The Landscape Officer will also get involved in recommending and helping discharge any landscape conditions that might need to be set as part of any formal planning consent.</p>	<p>2013</p> <p>2013 Ongoing</p>	<p>Landscape Planning Officer / PPT Manager</p> <p>Planning Officers</p>
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<p>2 3</p>	<p>A clearer understanding of good landscape planning and design within stakeholders groups</p> <p>Promotion of best practice in landscape design, implementation and management as it evolves</p>	<p>Member workshops will be hosted in conjunction with other Officers looking at the broad principals of good design in planning, including that of landscape design and analysis of specific case studies.</p> <p>Internal and external professional and non-professional input/discussion to help develop best practice within landscape design and management.</p> <p>Continued Professional Development Collating and refining feedback from all stakeholders and publishing identified best practice through a series of web-based landscape guidelines. These guidelines will be aimed at developers and detail the generic requirements needed to satisfy landscape proposals as part of any planning application in Colchester Borough.</p>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>2013 Ongoing (updated annually)</p>	<p>Landscape Planning Officer / Members / Council Officers</p> <p>Landscape Consultants / Stakeholders</p>
<p>1 2 4</p>	<p>The character of the existing wider landscape will be identified and where recognised as important and/or beneficial clearly reflected within individual development.</p>	<p>The underlying landscape character within the Borough is well documented in a number of the Council's Planning Policy Documents. Development proposals will be cross-checked against these, with professional observation on site by the Council's Landscape Planning Officer and where applicable through stakeholder observation/feedback.</p> <p>Development proposals will then be steered to ensure that dominant landscape characteristics, both aquatic and terrestrial, are identified and/or enhanced within individual developments throughout the planning process.</p>	<p>2013 Ongoing</p>	<p>Landscape Planning Officer / Planning Officers / Stakeholders</p>

1 4	Professional monitoring of the implementation of principal landscape schemes. This is to ensure that landscape schemes that have been negotiated and agreed as part of the planning process are delivered 'on the ground'.	The Landscape Planning Officer will where possible ensure that the professional implementation and monitoring of the landscape elements in any major development is secured and enforced as part of the planning process.	2013 Ongoing	Landscape Planning Officer / Planning Officers / Planning Enforcement Officers
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