

Colchester City Council Preferred Options Local Plan Topic Paper Spatial Strategy October 2025



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Executive Summary

The Spatial Strategy is central to the Local Plan. It sets out how land will be used and developed across a specific area by considering social, economic, and environmental factors, such as housing, jobs, and infrastructure. It guides decisions on where new development should be located and where it should be limited, with the goal of creating sustainable communities. In establishing a strategy for the growth of the City, there are a huge number of factors to consider. The Local Plan needs to balance the requirement of protecting the countryside and the natural environment, while accommodating the level of growth required across the City to 2041.

Officers developed seven spatial strategy approaches to accommodate growth, which were discussed with Members, the Residents Panel and others;

- 1) Substantial Growth in Garden Communities and Suburbs;
- 2) A Hubs and Spokes Model that focuses growth in larger settlements serving surrounding villages;
- 3) An Environment Led approach, which limits growth in those locations most constrained by environmental designations and instead focus's it where it could deliver enhanced environmental infrastructure;
- 4) An option where growth is focused in key Transport Corridors;
- 5) Expansion and Regeneration of Colchester Urban Area, which would also require growth elsewhere;
- 6) Proportionate Growth which delivers growth proportionately across all of Colchester's settlements;
- 7) A Community Gain option which would aim to deliver growth where the public benefits would be greatest ie provision of a new school or green infrastructure.

Officers then used these spatial strategy approaches to develop seven spatial strategy options to help determine where new development should take place. These were developed taking into account the emerging evidence base and early consultation. Some of these options combine more than one of the approaches detailed above. The options were; continuing the existing Spatial Strategy; a new Garden Community in addition to TCBGC; Garden Suburbs; Intensification in the City Centre; Transport Corridors; Hubs and Spokes; Environment Led.

Alongside this work and as part of developing the spatial strategy, it is necessary to review the settlement hierarchy. A settlement hierarchy ranks settlements by size and range of services and the potential opportunities they offer, such as a city at the top and a hamlet at the bottom. This classification helps guide development decisions, ensuring new development is placed in the most sustainable locations based on their current and potential role and function within the area.

The Colchester hierarchy retains the Urban Area, including the City Centre, at the top and this is where development will be directed in the first instance. It will enable greater use

of brownfield sites and facilitate higher density developments in highly accessible locations.

Next in the hierarchy are Growth and Opportunity Areas. These Growth and Opportunity Areas include the Hythe, Magdalen Street, Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community and Marks Tey where there is scope for large scale development and regeneration.

Outside of the main urban area are a number of larger settlements which have some of the largest populations as well as many facilities, services, and travel choices, or they are well located in relation to key transport corridors. As such, it is proposed to group Tiptree, Wivenhoe and West Mersea as the next tier within the hierarchy; Large Settlements.

Medium Settlements include settlements with a range of community and social facilities but to a lesser extent than the infrastructure within the larger settlements. These medium settlements are capable of accommodating growth appropriate to the size, scale, infrastructure and constraints of the settlement.

Small Settlements include those known as 'other villages' in the adopted Local Plan. The Local Plan includes appropriate scale allocations in some of Colchester's small settlements reflecting the size and level of community and social infrastructure available as well as acknowledging constraints.

The countryside remains at the bottom of the hierarchy, recognising it needs to be protected.

The preferred spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy were informed through consultation [summary of the issues and options engagement](#) and assessment within the Sustainability Appraisal. In summary, the SA reported that continuing with the existing spatial strategy is expected to perform the most favourably in relation to the greatest number of sustainability objectives. Other emerging evidence was also used to inform the preferred strategy.

The preferred spatial strategy takes forward the existing spatial strategy, whilst incorporating some of the strengths and positives from a number of the alternative spatial strategy options. These include:

- Focus on growth in the existing city centre and urban area;
- Regeneration and intensification within growth and opportunity areas i.e. the Hythe;
- Significant scale of growth along transport corridors, including Langham;
- Longer-term, large-scale growth at Marks Tey;
- Growth in other settlements, to support communities, provide opportunities for people to remain in villages and to sustain and enhance facilities and infrastructure;
- Ensure protection and enhancement of the most sensitive environments.

The preferred Spatial Strategy is contained within Policy ST3 in the Preferred Options Local Plan. The Plan makes provision for growth and supporting infrastructure across

the Colchester area to 2041. Enough homes have been provided for starting with the most sustainable and accessible locations in the urban area or close to transport corridors and existing centres, where there tends to be a range of employment opportunities, facilities, services and travel choices. Additionally, an appropriate level of growth is allocated within the large, medium and some small settlements, based on the opportunities and constraints of each settlement and informed by the wider evidence base.

The growth needs of Colchester are balanced against the need to protect and enhance biodiversity, landscape and heritage. The highest areas of sensitivity are receiving the lowest levels of growth in this Local Plan. This approach also ensures that existing settlements maintain their distinctive character and role by avoiding harmful coalescence between them and through conserving their setting.

The re-use of previously developed land and developments of higher densities (particularly in the Urban Area of Colchester) will be supported where this enables a more efficient use of land.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 To help with the consideration, interpretation and consultation on the Preferred Options Regulation 18 Plan and later stages of plan making, a series of Topic Papers have been prepared which summarise the evidence base and detail how evidence has helped shape the policies in the Preferred Options Local Plan. These Topic Papers are 'live' documents and will be updated as the plan making process progresses.
- 1.2 This is the Spatial Strategy Topic Paper. It sets out the Spatial Strategy Options and how these have developed for the new Colchester Local Plan. To set the context for these options, a number of broad spatial approaches are described with the options comprising one or more of these approaches. This Topic Paper provides the context for the spatial strategy and Policy ST3 of the Preferred Options Local Plan.
- 1.3 A summary of each of the spatial approaches, followed by the spatial strategy options is set out. These options have been appraised as part of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to enable early consideration of the likely sustainability implications. All options have been developed to the same level of detail.
- 1.4 The spatial approaches and options were developed by Officers. A Member briefing was held in May 2024 setting out these options and to provide an indication of the considerations which may inform preferred options through the evidence base. In June 2024, Local Plan Committee were presented with the spatial strategy options and Members noted the spatial approaches and spatial options (set out in paras 5.19-5.41 of the report) which are to be tested by the relevant evidence to inform the consideration and drafting of the Preferred Options Local Plan. The Placemaking Issues and Options engagement included questions which related to spatial options using more accessible language (e.g. should growth go in urban areas or rural areas). This high-level consideration of "options" was also carried out at workshops with the Council's Residents Panel.
- 1.5 The evidence base has evolved during plan making and will continue to evolve after the Preferred Options Local Plan is published for consultation. The emerging evidence has influenced the spatial strategy options. Chapter 4 sets out how the evidence has refined the options, and the preferred spatial strategy has been reached. Chapter 5 sets out the preferred spatial strategy and includes an explanation of the settlement hierarchy.
- 1.6 Other relevant Topic Papers include:
 - Site Allocations Process
 - Housing
 - Environment
 - Infrastructure
 - Employment
 - Transport

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

1.7 The [NPPF](#) is the overarching planning framework which provides national planning policy and principles for the planning system in England. The NPPF was originally published in March 2012 and has since been updated and revised several times. The most recent update to the NPPF was in December 2024.

1.8 The three overarching objectives of the planning system are set out in paragraph 8 of the NPPF, which should be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that net gains are achieved across each of the different objectives:

“an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural wellbeing; and

an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

1.9 The new Local Plan must be consistent with the requirements of the NPPF, which states:

“Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings”.

1.10 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF states the need for strategic policies in plan making, which set out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places (to ensure outcomes support beauty and placemaking), making sufficient provision for:

“a) homes (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;

b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);

c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and

d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.”

2. Spatial Strategy Approaches

Overview

- 2.1 The Spatial Strategy will be central to the Local Plan. In establishing a strategy for the growth of the City, there are a huge number of factors to take into account. The Local Plan will need to balance the requirement of protecting the countryside and the natural environment, while accommodating the level of growth required across the City to 2041. In accordance with the NPPF, it will also need to plan for new infrastructure requirements to support the growth planned.
- 2.2 The Local Plan will need to use the green network and waterways and the 'creating a better environment' agenda as a key starting point of the Local Plan as agreed by [Local Plan Committee](#) in October 2023. There will also be challenges in preventing coalescence of settlements and the protection of rural character, whilst allowing villages to grow sustainably to meet local needs for housing, employment and infrastructure.
- 2.3 There are different approaches representing a spatial pattern which may have different spatial options within them. Whilst it is important to keep the options realistic and relatable, it is helpful to understand the spatial approaches at a high level informing the options themselves.
- 2.4 Officers developed seven spatial strategy approaches in Spring 2024. These are:
- Substantial Growth – Garden Communities and Suburbs
 - Hubs and Spokes Model
 - Environment Led
 - Transport Corridors
 - Expansion and Regeneration of Colchester Urban Area
 - Proportionate Growth
 - Community Gain
- 2.5 These approaches are described in more detail below.

Substantial Growth – Garden Communities and Suburbs

- 2.7 This approach includes development of one or more garden communities or suburbs within Colchester (in addition to Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community). This could include strategic development allocations across Colchester that follow the Garden Community Principles as set out in the Section 1 Local Plan, notably Policy SP7 – Place Shaping Principles.
- 2.8 A Garden Community would be a self-sustaining new community meeting the day to day needs for its residents. Key infrastructure would be provided as part of the development. These allocations could be of varying sizes but would likely be for a Garden Community of at least 1,400 homes and smaller for a Garden Suburb. This is considered an appropriate level of growth as it would trigger the requirement for a Primary School, in accordance with the Essex Developers Guide and the Department for Education which does not provide funding support for a one form entry primary school.
- 2.9 A Garden Community could be cross boundary, in a similar way to the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community. A Garden Community would be comprehensively planned over a longer time period than the Local Plan itself (which is up to 2041), likely a minimum of 20 to 30 years and could involve working with neighbouring Councils on land outside of Colchester. Under this approach land would be allocated for a Garden Community with indicative housing and employment numbers given and principles for the Garden Community, with more detail to follow through masterplanning, design codes and more detailed guidance/policy.
- 2.10 A Garden Suburb would likely be for a smaller number of homes and require smaller scale new infrastructure with contributions to existing infrastructure to meet needs. A Garden Suburb would also be comprehensively planned but would be delivered within the Local Plan period. Under this approach, land would be allocated for a Garden Suburb with housing and employment numbers and supporting infrastructure requirements, set out within the allocation policy. Further detail would be provided through masterplanning and design codes.

Hubs and Spokes Model

- 2.11 This approach recognises the relationship between settlements within Colchester. It identifies hubs and spokes – hubs are larger villages or small towns (currently identified as Sustainable Settlements in the adopted Local Plan) that provide services and facilities or a key transport hub and are a focus for the smaller villages and hamlets that surround it (spokes).
- 2.12 This approach would also apply to the urban area of Colchester, where there are wards within the City that also provide services and facilities to a wider neighbouring geographical area.
- 2.13 Under this approach, an appropriate and proportionate amount of growth will be considered for each group of hubs and spokes areas.

Environment Led

- 2.14 The Local Plan Committee has agreed that a priority for the Local Plan will be enhancing the green infrastructure network and the planning for a better environment agenda. Although all approaches will have this embedded, this spatial strategy approach takes it further.
- 2.15 This approach could identify settlements that have limited or no growth due to their existing environmental sensitivities. Under this approach, growth will be directed to settlements that have potential for conserving and enhancing the environment through development. This could be through providing new green infrastructure, linking existing green infrastructure to provide wider benefits or improving green infrastructure above existing requirements. This would enable growth to be a facilitator for environmental gain and enhancement as well as identifying areas that require additional protection due to national environmental constraints such as nature conservation designations and landscape designations.
- 2.16 This would apply to settlements of all size and scale across the city in all directions, including the urban area and more rural hinterland.

Transport Corridors

- 2.17 This option directs growth to key Transport Corridors. These corridors may be directly from or to Colchester City Centre and will include a range of transport modes including rail (Marks Tey, Wivenhoe, Hythe, Chappel and Wakes Colne, Colchester Town, Hythe and Colchester) and road, including the A12. There is also potential for a transport corridor to include the route of the Rapid Transit System (RTS). This may also have the potential to include opportunities to expand or deliver enhanced connections to the RTS or other key transport corridor or new corridors.
- 2.18 Developments within the City Centre will likely be high density due to the limited development opportunities available. However, there may be lower density along the transport corridors. This approach would encourage residents to travel more sustainably across the City area.

Expansion and Regeneration of Colchester Urban Area

- 2.19 This approach would seek to focus development to the Colchester urban area, creating urban extensions to deliver large scale new communities on the edge of Colchester. This would consider growth to the north of Colchester beyond the A12, to the east around St Johns and Bullock Wood, to the south around Berechurch and towards Layer de la Haye and to the west of Stanway around Copford and Marks Tey. Under this approach there would be limited development of settlements outside of the urban area of Colchester, although these would likely need to accommodate the required proportion of small sites.
- 2.20 Development of the City Centre would need to be at a higher density due to the limited development opportunities that exist. Regeneration areas could be identified within the

Urban Area to encourage growth and redevelopment. These could include areas such as parts of the City Centre and Hythe.

Proportionate Growth

- 2.21 This approach delivers growth proportionately across all of Colchester's settlements. This approach would enable growth in each of the settlements across the City with the population of each settlement used to generate a housing figure which is proportionate to the size of the existing population.
- 2.22 The approach will need to consider if the smallest settlements in the current settlement hierarchy, identified as either other villages or countryside, would be included in a spatial option based on this approach.
- 2.23 The distribution of growth within each settlement would vary and also needs to take into account the services and facilities within each settlement. The Colchester Urban Area would also be included within this approach and would need to accommodate the level of growth calculated based on the existing population of the Urban Area and existing services and facilities.
- 2.24 Alternatively, to deliver the proportionate growth approach, the overall housing figure for Colchester could be calculated using the population for each ward. In this approach each ward would then need to accommodate their calculated housing figure.

Community Gain

- 2.25 This approach seeks to deliver growth across Colchester where there are the biggest public benefits and gains provided through development. This could include infrastructure provision such as improved connectivity and mobility, a new school, a new medical facility, community facilities, retail and employment opportunities, higher provision of affordable housing or meeting a specific housing need e.g. aging population, environmental gains such as provision of new green infrastructure in the form of a new County Park, open space, new or improved play space.
- 2.26 These public gain opportunities would need to be in addition to the current policy requirements. For example, delivering 30% affordable homes is not considered a public gain as this is the current policy requirement, however a site delivering 100% affordable housing would be considered more favourably under this approach.

3. Spatial Strategy Options

3.1 Officers used the spatial strategy approaches set out in the previous chapter to develop seven spatial strategy options for Colchester. These have been developed taking into account the emerging evidence base and early engagement undertaken as part of the Issues and Options for the Colchester Local Plan. Some of these options combine more than one approach.

3.2 All spatial strategy options include the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community, which is addressing the longer term needs for both Colchester and Tendring. The Garden Community will continue to deliver growth in the new plan period and beyond. The principle of the Garden Community was established in the joint Strategic Section 1 Local Plan. The Councils have prepared a Development Plan Document which was adopted in May/ June 2025. The Development Plan Document sets out that up to 7,500 homes will be delivered at the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community over the next 30 to 40 years. Some of these homes will make a contribution to meeting the needs of Colchester up to 2041, the plan period for the new Local Plan. The Garden Community will therefore feature within the preferred spatial strategy for the Local Plan. This quantum will be the same regardless of the spatial strategy eventually chosen for the Local Plan, as this has already been established.

3.3 All the spatial strategy options have been included on the basis that it is expected that each are capable of accommodating Colchester's required level of growth, including needs for different groups within the community including affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disability, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 63.

3.4 In accordance with NPPF paragraph 73, all spatial strategy options will also be required to ensure:

- At least 10% of the identified housing need is on sites no larger than 1ha (or justify why this cannot be achieved) and
- Seek opportunities to support small sites for community-led developments for housing and self-build and custom build housing.

3.5 The Spatial Strategy Options developed in Spring 2024 are:

- Continuing existing Spatial Strategy (Option 1)
- New Garden Community (Option 2)
- Garden Suburbs (Option 3)
- Intensification in the City Centre (Option 4)
- Transport Corridors (Option 5)
- Hubs and Spokes (Option 6)
- Environment Led (Option 7)

3.6 Each Spatial Strategy Option is set out in more detail below.

Continuing existing Spatial Strategy

3.7 The existing spatial strategy in the adopted Colchester Local Plan focuses growth at the most accessible and sustainable locations. This includes growth within the Urban Area of Colchester and a variety of settlements, including development of a new settlement through the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community.

3.8 The spatial hierarchy focuses growth in the urban area of Colchester. The second tier includes 'Sustainable Settlements' across Colchester where appropriate growth is planned for. This second tier also includes the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community. The third tier is settlements termed "Other Villages" where limited growth is supported. The fourth and final tier is the countryside of Colchester where development will only be supported in exceptional circumstances.

New Garden Community

3.9 Alongside the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community, significant growth would be located through a new Garden Community at Marks Tey. There would likely be a number of public gains through significant growth such as provision of new infrastructure. This would be a long-term strategy for growth; therefore, growth would also need to be located in other locations across the City. This option would include growth within the Urban Area of Colchester and proportional growth in other existing settlements and villages across the city.

3.10 This would consider growth to the north of Colchester beyond the A12, to the east around St Johns and Bullocks Wood, to the south around Berechurch and towards Layer de la Haye and to the west towards Copford and Marks Tey. Regeneration areas could be identified within the Urban Area of Colchester, including the City Centre and Hythe.

Garden Suburbs

3.11 Alongside the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community, smaller scale new communities would be developed as Garden Suburbs. These could be distributed across the City including within the Urban Area of Colchester to the South and East and around Marks Tey/Copford, Langham, Tiptree and Messing. Similarly to a Garden Community there is potential for a number of public gains in this option including delivery of new infrastructure.

- 3.12 This option would include growth within the Urban Area of Colchester and proportional growth in other existing settlements and villages across the city.

Intensification in the City Centre

- 3.13 This option would look to regenerate and intensify development within the City Centre. Developments would be of a higher density and could change the skyline of the City Centre.
- 3.14 This option would include proportional growth in other existing settlements and villages across the city.

Transport Corridors

- 3.15 This option would seek to focus growth in key Transport Corridors. These corridors may be directly from or to Colchester City Centre and will include a range of transport modes including rail (Marks Tey, Wivenhoe, Hythe, Chappel and Wakes Colne, Colchester Town and Colchester) and road, including the A12. These may follow the Garden Town and Villages concept.
- 3.16 There is also potential for a transport corridor to include the route of the Rapid Transit System (RTS).
- 3.17 This option would include growth within the Urban Area of Colchester and proportional growth in other existing settlements and villages across the city.
- 3.18 This would consider growth to the north of Colchester beyond the A12, to the northeast around St Johns and Bullocks Wood, to the south around Berechurch and towards Layer de la Haye and to the west towards Copford and Marks Tey. Regeneration areas could be identified within the Urban Area of Colchester, including the City Centre and Hythe.

Hubs and Spokes

- 3.19 A number of Hubs and Spokes will be identified across Colchester, with a higher level of growth attributed to the hub and smaller growth in the spokes. An early iteration of the Hubs and Spokes model is set out in the table below; however this would need to evolve further as the evidence base emerges.
- 3.20 Although Wivenhoe is one of the largest hubs within the Colchester City area, spokes are located within Tendring, therefore it has not been included within this option.
- 3.21 This option would also include growth within the Urban Area of Colchester.

3.22 This option may include proportional growth in other existing settlements and villages across the city, which are not identified as hubs or spokes.

Hubs									
	Tiptree	West Mersea	Rowhedge	Eight Ash Green	Marks Tey	Chappel	Great Horkesley	Layer de la Haye	West Bergholt
Spokes	Great & Lt. Wigborough	East Mersea	Fingringhoe	Fordham	Copford & Copford Green	Wakes Colne	Boxted	Abberton & Langenhoe	Wormingford
	Layer Breton	Peldon		Aldham	Easthorpe		Little Horkesley	Birch	Mount Bures
	Salcott				Great Tey				
	Messing								

Environment Led

- 3.23 An environment led Spatial Strategy would seek to limit growth in those locations which are most significantly constrained by environmental designations such as Dedham and Mersea and other locations within or close to the highest level of environmental designation such as the European Habitats sites, SSSIs and National Landscapes or for their heritage significance.
- 3.24 Locations which are of environmental value for their landscape, heritage or biodiversity significance through lower tier designations could support growth with the priority focus to deliver significant enhancements and environmental gains to the area such as through a Country Park. This could include South Colchester and other locations including Tiptree. The focus for selecting the full range of settlements to accommodate growth would be informed by evidence identifying the locations which would benefit most from enhanced green infrastructure for environmental, amenity and health and wellbeing benefits delivering enhanced provision where the most significant gap in such provision is currently.
- 3.25 Based on the current network and the most significant gaps in provision identified through the Open Spaces Report¹ are West and South Colchester. This identifies the combined quantity of open space in West Colchester as being lower than the recommended provision by 1.9ha per 1000 people, and by 0.64ha per 1000 people in South Colchester.

Table 10.3.2: Current parks, natural and amenity quantity levels by analysis area

Analysis area	Parks and gardens		Natural & Semi-natural		Amenity greenspace		Combined	
	(Hectares per 1000 population)							
	0.25		3.07		1.35		4.67	
	Current provision	+ / -	Current provision	+ / -	Current provision	+ / -	Current provision	+ / -
Central/East	0.34	+0.09	3.27	+0.20	1.32	+0.03	4.93	+0.26
North	-	-0.25	2.95	-0.12	2.06	+0.71	5.01	+0.34
South	-	-0.25	3.10	+0.03	0.93	-0.42	4.03	-0.64
West	-	-0.25	1.22	-1.85	1.55	+0.20	2.77	-1.90

- 3.26 This option may include proportional growth in other existing settlements and villages away from the settlements most significantly environmentally constrained.

¹ Open Spaces Report – April 2023. [CBC-null-Open-Space-Report-CCC - Open Space Report - April 2023.pdf \(windows.net\)](#)

4. Refining the Spatial Options

4.1 The approach to Issues and Options for the Local Plan was an iterative process based upon themes. This included a mixture of online surveys and questionnaires via the Consultation Portal, briefing sessions with Members, engagement with Town and Parish Councils including one to one meetings and site visits, and workshop sessions with the Council's Resident Panel. A [summary of the issues and options engagement](#) has been prepared and is available to view on the Council's website.

4.2 Some key findings which have informed the spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy include:

- Continuing focus of growth to the City Centre and Urban Area of Colchester, although it is considered the existing strategy is too restrictive for smaller settlements as there is a desire for some small scale development in the smaller settlements to support existing services and facilities and enable downsizing or new families to remain in the local area;
- Growth should be located close to key transport corridors, particularly the rail network;
- Growth through a new large scale community may be supported, if there is infrastructure also provided alongside new homes;
- The countryside should remain protected with limited growth;
- Potential to explore higher density developments particularly in the City Centre;
- The individual character of existing settlements should be protected and gaps between settlements maintained to prevent coalescence;
- Sustainable transport links are important, connecting smaller settlements within the larger more sustainable settlements could be an opportunity to be explored further;
- Existing transport infrastructure constraints need to be considered including A12 and A120; and
- There should be a preference for development of brownfield sites ahead of greenfield sites.

Sustainability Appraisal

4.3 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has assessed the seven spatial strategy options [Continuing existing Spatial Strategy (Option 1), New Garden Community (Option 2), Garden Suburbs (Option 3), Intensification in the City Centre (Option 4), Transport Corridors (Option 5), Hubs and Spokes (Option 6) and Environment Led (Option 7)]. The findings of this have been key in arriving at the preferred spatial strategy. The appraisal findings were provided to the Council in August 2024, in advance of preparation of the Preferred Options Local Plan. These SA findings have informed the preparation of the Preferred Options Local Plan.

- 4.4 In summary, the SA reported that continuing with the existing spatial strategy is expected to perform the most favourably in relation to the greatest number of sustainability objectives. This option is expected to have the joint most significant positive effects (six, including mixed effects) alongside the spatial strategy option Transport Corridors. However, continuing with the existing spatial strategy outperforms Transport Corridors given that it has more significant positive effects without any combined negative effects than Transport Corridors. Positive effects identified in the SA for other spatial strategy options have been considered and incorporated into the preferred spatial strategy.
- 4.5 Continuing with the existing spatial strategy will continue to make good use of the urban area while also providing a suitable level of growth within the second tier settlements (i.e. the Sustainable Settlements). As such it will help to address issues of deprivation relating to barriers to housing and services (SA objective 1: housing) where the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 identifies that parts of the urban area fall within the 10% most deprived in the country. Including a distribution of development to the Sustainable Settlements will help to address similar issues within the Rural North, Marks Tey and Layer and Mersea and Pyefleet wards, all of which also include geographical areas² that fall within the 10% most deprived in the countryside.
- 4.6 The continued focus of much of the development at the urban area will provide new residents with good access to the important employment areas and sustainable transport links which is likely to help attract inward investment (SA objective 3: economic growth). There is also potential to support the viability of sustainable transport services including the RTS in the urban area (SA objective 4: transport). Unlike some of the other options considered (notably Options 2: New Garden Community, 3: Garden Suburbs, 4: Intensification in the City Centre and 7: Environment-led), Option 1 would also support continued sustainable growth and the potential for suitable expansion of services provision and some job creation to support local populations within the Sustainable Settlements. It is expected that this approach will help to limit the potential for high levels of travel from these settlements as well as over reliance on the Urban Area which might otherwise result in overburdening of services and facilities (SA objectives 5: community health and wellbeing and 6: services and facilities) as well as congestion in this part of the plan area and intensification of air pollution (SA objective 13: air quality) within the air quality management area (AQMA) in the City Centre.
- 4.7 Several significant negative effects are recorded for the Continuing with the existing spatial strategy option. The adverse effects expected largely reflect the relatively large amount of development that will be required to meet the needs of Colchester. The significant effects recorded for this option reflect the potential for impacts on heritage assets across the plan area (SA objective 7: historic environment), greenfield land take

² The SA report refers to Lower layer super output areas (LSOA).

and loss and disturbance of habitats (SA objective 8: biodiversity and geodiversity). Through this option development is also likely to occur within more rural parts of the plan area and in areas that may affect the setting of the Dedham Vale National Landscape (SA objective 9: landscape).

- 4.8 Considering this option at a strategic scale, this mostly reflects the distribution of heritage assets, biodiversity assets and value landscape features close to some of the Sustainable Settlements. There is likely to be potential to limit these effects by providing lower levels of development at particularly sensitive locations. For example, this includes Dedham which lies within the National Landscape and West Mersea which lies close to several internationally important biodiversity designations. Furthermore, it may be that when considering specific site options for development in more detail, less sensitive locations for development can be found at these settlements.
- 4.9 The Transport Corridors option could achieve benefits relating to economic growth given its support for development in areas that have best access to transport corridors, which is likely to make the plan area more attractive to new residents as well as investors. This option includes development at strategically important roads through Colchester. While development at these locations could increase private car travel, unless substantial mitigation was achieved, there is potential to support economic growth (SA objective 3: economic growth) along the strategic road network and close to existing areas of importance for the economy in Colchester.
- 4.10 Growth along transport corridors has been incorporated into the preferred spatial strategy. The strategy includes a growth area at Marks Tey, which is located on the junction of the A12 and A120 and has a mainline railway station, and large scale growth at Langham, which is adjacent to the A12.
- 4.11 Reusing brownfield land where possible enables a more efficient use of land and has been incorporated within the preferred spatial strategy. This also justifies the identification of opportunity areas at the Hythe and Magdalen Street, to promote regeneration and intensification. Similarly, the SA has found that large scale edge of settlement developments will have the biggest public gains, particularly through infrastructure which highlights the need to include large scale allocations within the Local Plan.
- 4.12 Locating growth in or close to centres where there are a wider range of employment opportunities will limit travel for employment and also provide greater access to jobs. This has the potential to limit congestion during peak travel times which would otherwise affect economic growth.
- 4.13 The intensification of existing employment sites may result in an over concentration of employment and jobs within existing centres, which would have a negative impact to

economic growth. Therefore, there needs to be a balance between sustaining existing employment opportunities while also creating new opportunities across Colchester.

- 4.14 The environment led approach could lead to an over development in the north of Colchester, due to the south being more heavily constrained by environmental designations. This could also result in a less sustainable development, given the north of Colchester contains a larger proportion of the more rural settlements. In terms of positive effects, the SA reports that the Environment Led option has potential to achieve benefits over and above those expected for other options that might be incorporated to some extent as part of the preferred approach. Elements of this option have been incorporated into the preferred spatial strategy.
- 4.15 Similarly, a spatial strategy that looks to intensify the City Centre, is likely to have a greater impact to access to and provision of green spaces due to the limited land availability within the City Centre. This would not be in accordance with the importance of the green network that has been identified as a key consideration for the Local Plan. There is a need to balance growth against the negative impacts to the natural and historic environment, which may justify a lower level of growth in some settlements.
- 4.16 The SA found that the Hubs and Spokes and Garden Suburbs options perform less favourably. For the Hubs and Spokes option, this partly reflects the location of Hub and Spoke settlements assigned for growth in areas of sensitivity in terms of heritage assets (SA objective 7: historic environment), environmental designations (SA objective 8: biodiversity and geodiversity) and landscape importance including the National Landscape (SA objective 9: landscape). This option would also fail to make best use of the Urban Area and increase reliance on the smaller Hub and Spoke settlements in the plan area. While a level of development would be provided at the Urban Area, it would be more limited than through some of the other options. Some new residents would be located at settlements at which development is likely to occur on higher value agricultural soils (SA objective 2: efficient use of land) as well as at which their healthcare needs are less likely to be met with no healthcare facilities provided nearby (SA objective 5: community and health and wellbeing).
- 4.17 The Garden Suburb option would achieve the delivery of a number of growth points as Garden Suburbs, the scale of growth at each location would be much more limited than what is achieved at a new Garden Community. Therefore, the new infrastructure and level of self-containment achieved at each location is expected to be much less than would be likely to be achieved at a Garden Community. Converse to Option 6, Option 3 would also direct a limited amount of development to the Sustainable Settlements, increasing reliance on the urban area (with some growth at this location provided as Garden Suburbs to the south and east) as the main service provider with potential for increased travel to this location resulting in congestion and air pollution (SA objectives 4: transport and 13: air quality). This approach is also unlikely to support sustainable

service growth to benefit the health and wellbeing of a substantial number of residents in the Sustainable Settlements (SA objective 5: community and health and wellbeing).

4.18 A summary of the expected sustainability effects of the seven spatial strategy options for the distribution of growth is provided in the table, below. This table is shown as Table 4.1 of the SA report and is accompanied in the SA report with a description of expected sustainability effects (see SA report chapter 4).

Summary of likely sustainability effects of each of the spatial strategy options

SA objective	Option 1: Existing Spatial Strategy	Option 2: New Garden Communit y	Option 3: Garden Suburbs	Option 4: City Centre Intensifica tion	Option 5: Transport Corridors	Option 6: Hubs And Spokes	Option 7: Environm ent Led
SA1: Housing	++/-	++/-?	++/-	+/-	++/-	++/-	+/-?
SA2: Efficient use of land	+/-?	--/+?	-?	+/-?	+/-?	--?	+/-?
SA3: Economic growth	++	++/-	+/-	++/-	++	+/-	+/-
SA4: Transport	++/-	+/-?	--/+	++/-?	++/-	+/-	++/-?
SA5: Community and health and wellbeing	++	++/-?	--/+	++/--?	++/-	--/+	++/-
SA6: Services and facilities	++/-	++/-?	+/-	++/-	++/-	+/-	--/+
SA7: Historic environment	--?	-?	-?	--?	--?	--?	-?
SA8: Biodiversity and geodiversity	--?	--?	--?	-?	--?	--?	+/-?
SA9: Landscape	--?	-?	-?	-?	--?	--?	+/-?
SA10: Climate change	+	++	+	+	+	0	+

SA objective	Option 1: Existing Spatial Strategy	Option 2: New Garden Communit y	Option 3: Garden Suburbs	Option 4: City Centre Intensifica tion	Option 5: Transport Corridors	Option 6: Hubs And Spokes	Option 7: Environm ent Led
SA11: Flood risk	-	-	-	-	-	-	+/-
SA12: Waste	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SA13: Air quality	++/-	+/-?	--/+	++/--?	++/-	+/-	++/-?
SA14: Water	-?	-	-	-	-	-	-

Transport

- 4.19 A Transport Evidence Report (February 2025) was commissioned to assist the Council in developing and assessing preferred site allocations from the perspective of transport for the emerging Local Plan. This was achieved through reviewing the sustainability of locations for development, consideration of mitigation approaches and using transport modelling to gauge the impact of the preferred options allocations.
- 4.20 The highway network was assessed using the Colchester Transport Model to understand the current constraints on the highway network. A comprehensive review was also undertaken to understand the most sustainable locations for new developments, based on existing connectivity of sites and representing where there is the greatest opportunity for sustainable transport.
- 4.21 An initial draft emerging development trajectory which identified a shortlist of potential allocations for further testing based on the preferred spatial strategy, following assessment of sites through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and against other available evidence was evaluated to provide a high-level assessment of the impact on existing transport networks. Additional assessment was undertaken for the development around Marks Tey, to understand further the potential impact on the A12 and A120.

Infrastructure Audit and Delivery Plan – Stage 3 Report

- 4.22 The Infrastructure Audit Delivery Plan (IADP) Stage 1 and 2 identifies the baseline for 37 types of infrastructure. The report produced by AECOM in mid-late 2024 set out in detail the baseline position for each infrastructure type. It also reviewed the high-level spatial options consulted on by the Council as part of the Local Plan Issues and Options stage, in order to identify infrastructure implications of those options and inform the preferred options for the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan. The conclusions relevant to each infrastructure type are set out in the initial stages 1 and 2 [report](#) supported by the Infrastructure Topic Paper.
- 4.23 The Stage 3 IADP [report](#) (January 2025) has assessed an initial draft emerging development trajectory which identified a shortlist of potential allocations for further testing based on the preferred spatial strategy, following an initial assessment of sites through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and against other available evidence. This considers the demand which potential planned growth will generate for each infrastructure type, and how infrastructure will be provided to meet this demand to 2041. It should be noted that the emerging development trajectory represents a scenario for the potential delivery of housing and employment land in Colchester which was produced in November 2024 to allow infrastructure implications to be tested. Further consideration and refinement has informed the allocations identified in this Preferred Options Plan.

4.24 Work on the IADP will continue and will be used to further develop the Place policies to ensure that all policies include site specific infrastructure requirements where these are identified through the IADP.

Settlement Hierarchy

4.25 As part of developing the spatial strategy, it is necessary to review and update the existing settlement hierarchy. A settlement hierarchy ranks and classifies settlements based on their sustainability.

4.26 In the adopted Colchester Local Plan, the settlement hierarchy is as follows:

- Colchester Urban Area
- Sustainable Settlements (including the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community)
- Other Villages
- Countryside

4.27 The table below outlines those settlements currently identified as “sustainable settlements” and “other villages”.

Sustainable Settlements	Other Villages
Abberton and Langenhoe	Aldham
Boxted	Birch
Chappel and Wakes Colne	Dedham Heath
Copford and Copford Green	Easthorpe
Dedham	East Mersea
Eight Ash Green	Fingringhoe
Fordham	Great Wigborough
Great Horkesley	Layer Breton
Great Tey	Little Horkesley
Langham	Messing
Layer de la Haye	Mount Bures
Marks Tey	Peldon
Rowhedge	Salcott
Tiptree	Wormingford
West Bergholt	
West Mersea	
Wivenhoe	

4.28 Taking into account the findings of the evidence base and engagement undertaken to date, it is considered that the settlement hierarchy requires revision.

- 4.29 In the first instance, development should remain directed to the Urban Area of Colchester, including the City Centre. This will enable greater use of brownfield sites to be realised and developments of a higher density in highly accessible locations.
- 4.30 Next in the hierarchy are Growth and Opportunity Areas. These Growth and Opportunity Areas include the Hythe, Magdalen Street, University of Essex and Marks Tey. The Hythe is a former commercial harbour including some rundown and underused industrial land, and which is an established regeneration area. Magdalen Street is a key gateway to Colchester City Centre. There are a number of older commercial buildings suitable for reuse and or redevelopment to enhance this area and there has been changes in recent years. Regeneration will involve partnership working with public sector agencies, the local community and other key stakeholders including Community Land Trusts and the Hythe Task and Finish Group and future development planned as a part of the Transforming the City Centre project, funded by the Town Deal and Levelling Up Funds. The University of Essex and the Knowledge Gateway are important to Colchester City's economy and the vitality and viability of the city centre. Large areas of land have previously been promoted for development in and around Marks Tey and there is an opportunity for Garden Village scale growth. Its strategic location, along with the benefits the mainline train station brings, add weight to the opportunity for expansion and there is recognition that infrastructure improvements will be required to support development at the scale promoted. The Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community is also a Growth Area.
- 4.31 The role of larger settlements outside of the urban area should also be recognised. These settlements have the most facilities, services, travel choices and opportunities. These settlements also have some of the largest populations in Colchester. Key transport corridors across Colchester have also been identified for their function and connectivity. As such, it is proposed to group Marks Tey, Tiptree, Wivenhoe and West Mersea as the next tier within the hierarchy as Large Settlements.
- 4.32 Medium Settlements include settlements with a range of community and social infrastructure but to a lesser extent than the infrastructure within the larger settlements. These medium settlements are capable of accommodating growth appropriate to the size, scale, infrastructure and constraints of the settlement.
- 4.33 Small Settlements include settlements, those known as 'other villages' in the adopted Local Plan. The Local Plan includes small scale allocations in some of Colchester's small settlements reflecting the size and level of community and social infrastructure.
- 4.34 Creating a distinction between the large, medium and small settlements will also enable small scale development, which has been identified as a desire through engagement undertaken as part of the Issues and Options. However, by identifying villages as lower in the hierarchy, this will enable growth to be proportionate to the existing size of the settlement and constraints.

4.35 The countryside remains at the bottom of the hierarchy, recognising its need to be protected.

5. The Preferred Spatial Strategy including Settlement Hierarchy

5.1 The preferred spatial strategy takes forward the existing spatial strategy, also incorporating some of the strengths and positives from a number of the alternative spatial strategy options. These include:

- Focus on growth in the existing city centre and urban area;
- Regeneration and intensification within growth and opportunity areas, including the Hythe and Magdalen Street;
- Significant scale of growth along transport corridors, including Marks Tey and Langham;
- Longer term, large scale growth at Marks Tey;
- Growth in the other settlements, including some of Colchester's smaller villages, to support communities and provide opportunities to sustain and enhance facilities and infrastructure;
- Ensure protection and enhancement of the most sensitive environments.

5.2 The preferred Spatial Strategy as set out in the Preferred Options Local Plan is:

Policy ST3: Spatial Strategy

The Plan makes provision for growth and supporting infrastructure across the Colchester area to 2041. A sufficient number of homes have been provided in the plan to meet the overall housing requirement to 2041 as set out in Policy ST5.

Growth is directed across Colchester starting with the most sustainable and accessible locations in the urban area or close to, transport corridors and existing centres, where there tends to be a range of employment opportunities, facilities, services and travel choices for future communities.

Additionally, an appropriate level of growth is allocated within the large, medium and some small settlements, based on the opportunities and constraints of each settlement and informed by the wider evidence base. This can help support the long-term viability of services and facilities, which may otherwise be lost.

The growth needs of Colchester are balanced against the need to protect and enhance biodiversity, landscape and heritage. The highest areas of sensitivity are receiving the lowest levels of growth in this Local Plan. This approach also ensures that existing settlements maintain their distinctive character and role by avoiding harmful coalescence between them and through conserving their setting. New development will be required to respect the character and appearance of landscapes and the built environment and preserve or enhance the historic environment and biodiversity to safeguard the character of the City.

The Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community (TCBGC) and other large-scale developments will deliver substantial growth, enabling significant

community benefits to be realised. Opportunities for growth along key transport corridors, particularly with access to the rail network are favoured subject to sufficient capacity on the network and/or appropriate mitigation to support any enhancement required.

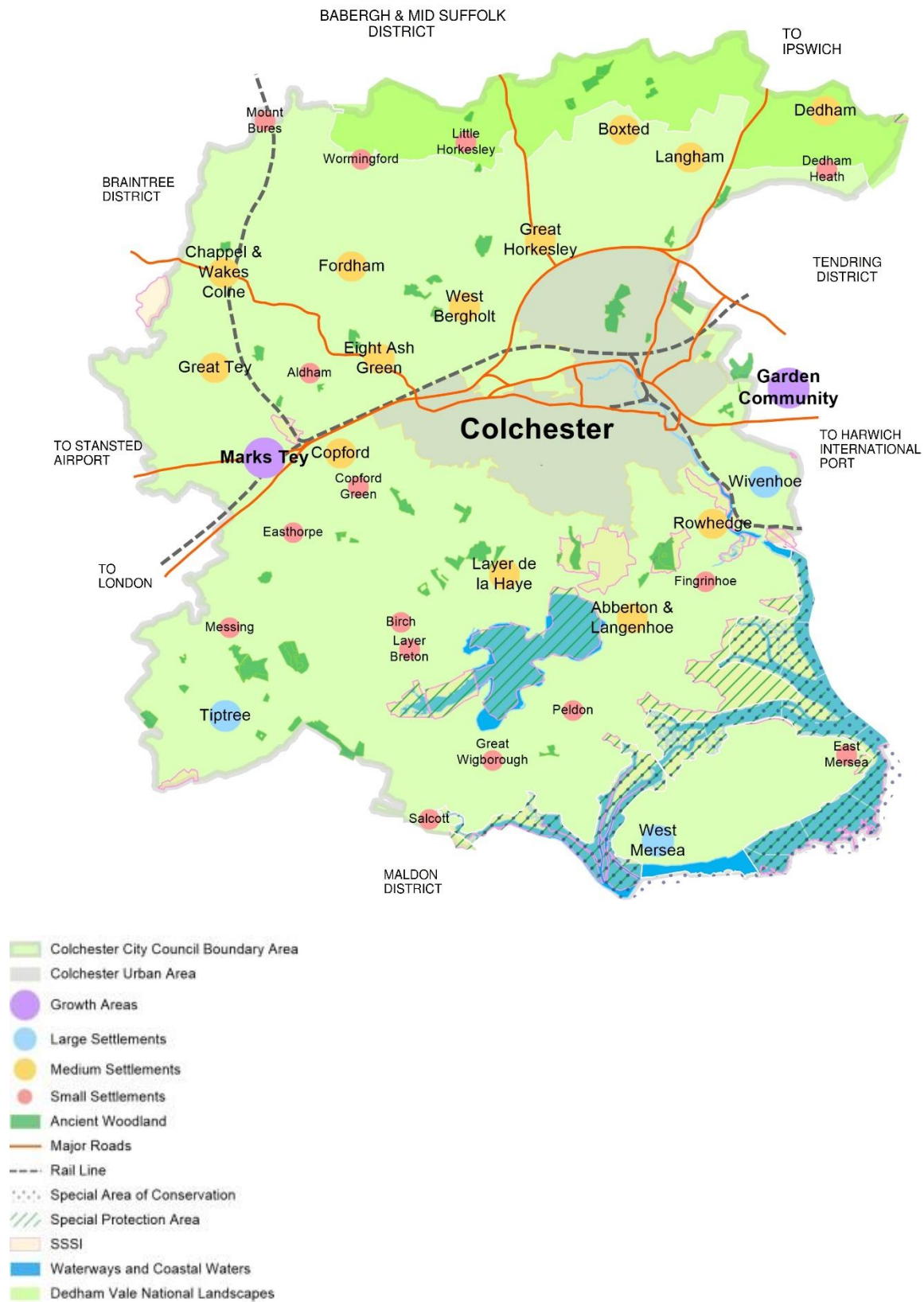
The re-use of previously developed land and developments of higher densities (particularly in the Urban Area of Colchester) will be supported where this enables a more efficient use of land. Opportunity areas are therefore identified at the Hythe and Magdalen Street.

The primary focus for growth is made through the allocations identified in this Local Plan, together with the existing commitments and TCBGC as set out in Policy ST5. Allocations are made in accordance with the settlement hierarchy set out below. The settlement hierarchy groups areas across Colchester based on their sustainability merits, size, function, opportunities and the services provided in each locality.

Settlement Hierarchy

Colchester Urban Area including City Centre
Growth and Opportunity Areas Hythe Opportunity Areas Magdalen Street Opportunity Area Marks Tey Growth Area Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community Growth Area
Large Settlements Tiptree West Mersea Wivenhoe
Medium Settlements Abberton and Langenhoe Boxted Chappel and Wakes Colne Copford Dedham and Dedham Heath Eight Ash Green Fordham Great Horkesley Great Tey Langham Layer de la Haye Rowhedge West Bergholt
Small Settlements Aldham Birch and Layer Breton Copford Green Easthorpe East Mersea Fingringhoe Great Wigborough Little Horkesley Messing Mount Bures Peldon Salcott Wormingford
Countryside

The spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy is illustrated in the key diagram.



Sustainability Appraisal findings

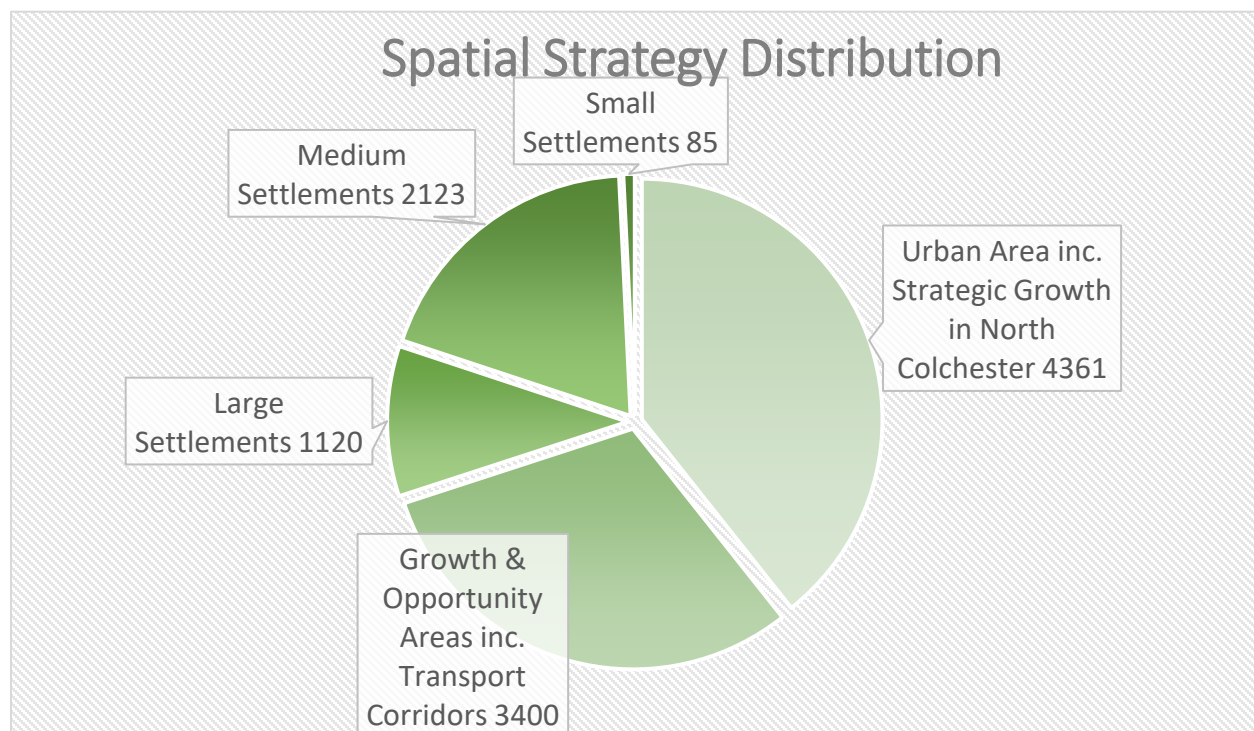
5.3 The SA report explains that Policy ST3 sets out the spatial distribution of growth for the plan area. The majority of development is to be delivered within the urban area or close to existing centres and also includes substantial development at the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community. The policy also sets out the settlement hierarchy for plan area by which the allocations have been made. The preferred spatial strategy taken forward through Policy ST3 best aligns with Option 1: Continuing existing Spatial Strategy but also incorporates elements of the other options considered.

5.4 The likely sustainability effects for Policy ST3: Spatial Strategy are summarised in the table below.

SA Objective	Policy ST3
SA1: Housing	++
SA2: Efficient use of land	--/+
SA3: Economic growth	++/-
SA4: Transport	++/-
SA5: Community and health and wellbeing	++/-
SA6: Services and facilities	++/-
SA7: Historic environment	--/+
SA8: Biodiversity and geodiversity	--/+
SA9: Landscape	--/+
SA10: Climate change	+/-
SA11: Flood risk	-
SA12: Waste	-
SA13: Air quality	++/-
SA14: Water	-?

Discussion on settlement hierarchy

- 5.5 This section provides an explanation of each settlement's role in the settlement hierarchy. The pie chart, below, illustrates the spatial strategy distribution and approximate number of houses allocated in each of the tiers in the settlement hierarchy. At the top of the hierarchy is the urban area and city centre, which will deliver the largest number of homes over the plan period. Next, is the growth and opportunity areas where a substantial number of homes will be delivered. At the bottom of the hierarchy, above countryside, is the small settlements, which will deliver a very small share of housing growth over the plan period.
- 5.6 In reviewing opportunities for growth and expansion of settlements it is important to recognise that as a plan making exercise it considers and assesses the opportunities for settlements to be extended to accommodate growth through the Colchester area. The way in which places grow is by extending from and within the existing built form – often defined by Settlement Boundaries – this is the basis of sound planning objectives and sustainable development. Settlement Boundaries relate to the settlements rather than Parishes and in many cases the settlement patterns bear no relationship to Parish Boundaries, which may sometimes relate to other neighbouring settlements.



Colchester

- 5.7 Within Colchester urban area and city centre, there is a range of employment opportunities, facilities, services, open space and sustainable travel choices for existing and future communities. This is the most sustainable location, and growth is directed here in the first instance.
- 5.8 The Preferred Options Plan includes allocations to deliver substantial growth in the Colchester urban area with requirements for masterplanning on larger sites to ensure good placemaking.

City Centre

- 5.9 The Council adopted a Colchester City Centre Masterplan in January 2024. The masterplan is about building on existing strengths and transforming the City Centre while conserving its proud heritage. The goal is greater prosperity, a better quality of life for all, and providing more choices for getting into and around the city. The Masterplan includes many things for people who already live, work and travel through the city centre today, it is very much about creating a city centre for the future. It looks to the needs of young people today, for our children, and our children's children.

North Colchester

- 5.10 North Colchester has seen significant change in recent years, this has included the opening of the A12 junction 28 and the Northern Approaches Road (Via Urbis Romanae) and the development of the Northern Gateway sports and leisure park, and Severalls and Chesterwell urban extensions. There is good open space provision and links between open spaces, which should be improved with development. Colchester Business Park and other employment uses are located in North Colchester. There is potential for development in the North-East to benefit from the development of the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community with links to the University of Essex. Whilst part of the Northern Gateway development has occurred north of the A12, the A12 continues to act as a strong boundary. North-west Colchester includes large areas of protected open space and areas at high risk of flooding. Parts of the north of Colchester city (Plains Farm) are within Tendring district.

South Colchester

- 5.11 South Colchester is home to the Garrison. Colchester became a garrison 2000 years ago, and today its military tradition is part of Colchester's outlook and character. Colchester has been a modern Garrison Town for the past 165 years. For the past 21 years, it has been home to 16 Air Assault Brigade, the UK's rapid response force. There are higher levels of deprivation than other parts of the city district (46.3% of households

in Old Heath and Hythe and 43.6% of households in Berechurch are not deprived in any dimension compared to 48.4% for the England average) and less variety of community and social infrastructure than other parts of the city. The 10 Year Plan for primary schools indicates that there is some capacity in schools over the next 5-year period. There is additional capacity of 60 places per year within existing accommodation of the schools in City southeast (Berechurch). Within South Colchester is the largest remaining section of semi-natural habitat on the Colchester plateau, free from large-scale development or aggregate extraction because of its history of military ownership. It comprises a broad wedge of land reaching from the Roman River in the south most of the way to the city centre. The southern section slopes down towards the river, but most of this area is broadly level, bisected by the narrow valley of Birch Brook.

West Colchester

- 5.12 West Colchester has seen significant change in recent years. This has included urban extensions to Stanway delivering a significant amount of new housing, a new primary school (Lakelands) and Stane Park retail centre. Like North Colchester, the A12 continues to act as a strong boundary. The railway also provides a strong boundary to the north. The A12 and railway line continues to define the northern boundary of West Colchester. The 10 Year Plan for primary schools indicates that there is additional capacity of 45 places per year within existing accommodation of the schools in City southwest (Stanway). There is generally good open space provision and links between open spaces, which should be improved with development but with gaps to the west of the area.

Growth and Opportunity Areas

- 5.13 The Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community (TCBGC), Marks Tey and other large-scale developments will deliver substantial growth, enabling significant community benefits to be realised. Opportunities for growth along key transport corridors, particularly with access to the rail network are favoured subject to sufficient capacity on the network and/or appropriate mitigation to support any enhancement required.

Hythe Opportunity Areas

- 5.14 The Hythe area is a former commercial harbour which includes some rundown and underused industrial land. There has been change in this area over the last few years, through expansion of the University of Essex and student accommodation. The area is an established regeneration area that seeks to deliver sustainable, mixed-use neighbourhoods, identifying the River Colne as a feature and respecting the historic character of the area.

- 5.15 There is good access to Hythe Station and the Hythe is located close to the University of Essex and City Centre but is constrained by flooding due to its proximity to the River Colne.
- 5.16 A number of sites are allocated for residential development in this area (see policies PP14, PP15 and PP16). However, there are additional opportunities at the Hythe, through wider regeneration. Regeneration will involve partnership working with public sector agencies, the local community and other key stakeholders including Community Land Trusts and the Hythe Task and Finish Group (responding to flooding issues in the area).

Magdalen Street Opportunity Area

- 5.17 Magdalen Street is a key gateway to Colchester City Centre. There are a number of older commercial buildings suitable for reuse and or redevelopment to enhance this area. The area has changed in recent years through the development of student accommodation and Aldi.
- 5.18 The area is located close to Colchester Town Station and future development is planned as a part of the Transforming the City Centre project, funded by the Town Deal and Levelling Up Funds. This includes improvements to the St Botolph junction to modernise the area creating a better balance between pedestrians, cyclists and motorists and improve the public space.

Marks Tey Growth Area

- 5.19 Marks Tey is located at the junction of the A12 and A120. It is essentially a linear settlement that, while being sustainably located, has been fragmented by the railway and A12/A120. It contains a good range of facilities which are located in different sections of the village; a railway station to the east providing an interchange between the mainline to London and branch services; a larger area of modern housing, village hall, commercial areas and the primary school to the west and retail facilities to the south of the A12. It is one of Colchester's larger settlements and has potential to benefit from opportunities provided by substantial growth.
- 5.20 Large areas of land have previously been promoted for development in and around Marks Tey and there is an opportunity for large scale growth, including a range of community and social infrastructure, in an accessible location. Its strategic location along with the benefits the train station brings, add weight to the potential for expansion. However, there is also recognition that infrastructure improvements will be required in order to support development at the scale promoted. Accordingly, the Plan allocates sites for housing which could deliver up to 2500 new homes within the plan period, and

a larger number in the longer term but on the proviso that it can be demonstrated that additional vehicular movements can be safely accommodated and impacts mitigated.

5.21 Additional employment land is also allocated, recognising the areas potential given, the level of growth proposed, its location on the strategic road network and its position in relation to Stansted to the west and the Haven ports to the west.

5.22 The policies recognise that there will be impacts on the strategic network and other infrastructure which will require adequate mitigation secured through the place policies. The Growth Area designation is intended to demonstrate that some development would be acceptable within the overall sites, subject to further evidence determining more details on the phasing and provision of appropriate mitigation.

Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community Growth Area

5.23 Whilst the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community is not being tested as part of the Plan, it is a Growth Area within Colchester's settlement hierarchy. The principles of the Garden Community are established through the Section 1 Local Plan and more detailed policies on the design and development of the Garden Community are included in the Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community Development Plan Document. Policy ST9 of the Preferred Options Plan provides a summary of what will be included in the Garden Community with reference to housing numbers, employment provision and the decision-making process.

Large Settlements

Tiptree

5.24 Tiptree is a large village located on the southwest boundary of Colchester. Development has grown up around key highway intersections in a roughly triangular built form. There is a small separate cluster of houses to the southwest of the main village known as Tiptree Heath. Tiptree has a district centre with a high number of key services and community facilities. It is the only large village with a secondary school. A neighbourhood plan with site allocations was adopted in 2023. The vision of the neighbourhood plan is to deliver a link road in the north of Tiptree, reducing congestion throughout the village. This plan seeks to build on the work undertaken to inform the Neighbourhood Plan and ensure the vision can be achieved.

West Mersea

5.25 West Mersea is a small coastal town located on the confluence of the Colne and Blackwater Estuaries approximately 15km from Colchester city centre. There are frequent bus routes serving the town to and from Colchester and serving the local secondary schools. West Mersea has numerous town centre and community uses both

within the district centre and throughout the town, making it a sustainable settlement. However, it has environmental constraints with the Colne and Blackwater estuaries, which are designated at international level for nature conservation (the Colne and Blackwater Estuaries are Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites and form part of the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation). A balance is needed to allow some development in this large and sustainable settlement but to limit this to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the Colne and Blackwater estuaries.

Wivenhoe

5.26 Wivenhoe benefits from good infrastructure provision including a mainline train station, a GP surgery, two primary schools, numerous shops and restaurants and abundant open space provision. There are also frequent bus services between Wivenhoe and Colchester, a cycle path between Wivenhoe and the University of Essex and the popular Wivenhoe Trail along the river to Colchester. However, there are a number of constraints which has influenced the amount of growth considered appropriate for Wivenhoe beyond 2033. Wivenhoe is bordered by the River Colne to the west and south. In addition to the physical boundary that the river presents, land falls within flood risk zone 3. There are a number of environmental designations surrounding Wivenhoe. The Upper Colne Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies to the west and south of Wivenhoe. The Colne Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar Site and SSSI and Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lie to the south-east of Wivenhoe. The Colne Local Nature Reserve and Local Wildlife Site runs adjacent to the built-up western boundary. The Coastal Protection Belt surrounds the west and south of Wivenhoe. Wivenhoe Gravel Pit SSSI lies to the north-east of Wivenhoe.

Medium Settlements

Abberton and Langenhoe

5.27 Abberton and Langenhoe were originally two separate settlements but have now effectively merged into one village which share services and facilities. The facilities in the village include a primary school, community hall, and public open space. The village benefits from good road connections to Colchester being situated along the B1025 which has bus stops situated along it which are served by the Mersea bus.

Boxted

5.28 Development in Boxted is currently concentrated within three distinct settlement areas: Boxted Cross, Workhouse Hill and an area to the south of the parish to the west of Straight Road. Development in Boxted Cross has grown in a linear manner around Straight Road/Carters Hill, Dedham Road/Cage Lane crossroads extending north eastwards as far as Cooks Lane. It is reasonably well served by services and facilities.

Chappel and Wakes Colne

5.29 Chappel and Wakes Colne are separate settlements but are located adjacent to one another and share services and facilities. Chappel has one core settlement area with three remote/dispersed small clusters of housing at Rose Green, Swan Street and Wakes Street. The core focus of Chappel is centred around the primary school. The settlement is defined to the east by the railway line, which is the operational Sudbury to Marks Tey branch line. Wakes Colne is the main settlement area with smaller dispersed clusters of housing around Inworth Lane and at Middle Green. The core focus of Wakes Colne is around the railway, defined to the east by the railway line, which is operational Sudbury to Marks Tey branch line. The railway station is also home to Chappel and Wakes Colne Railway Museum which hosts many events and houses a number of refurbished steam trains. There is an opportunity to improve safe and sustainable access to and from the station.

Copford

5.30 Development in Copford has grown in a linear manner along London Road, eastwards towards Stanway and westwards towards Marks Tey. Copford Green is located to the south of Copford and is one of Colchester's small settlements. Copford Church of England Primary School is located on Church Road between Copford and Copford Green. There is open space, a village hall, gift shop and pub within the parish and a number of local services including pubs, restaurants and a post office located along London Road in Stanway, just outside of the Copford parish boundary and in Marks Tey, which is approximately 1km from the centre of Copford.

Dedham and Dedham Heath

5.31 Most of the Dedham parish area falls within the Dedham Vale National Landscape (formerly AONB). The largest settlement within the parish is the main historic village of Dedham to the north. A smaller area of predominantly housing called Dedham Heath lies to the south and two smaller clusters of properties lie to the west and east of Dedham Heath known as Lamb Corner and Bargate Lane respectively. Dedham has a range of services and facilities, including its own primary school. In the adopted Local Plan, Dedham Heath was an 'other village'. However, given the connection between the two settlements and shared facilities and the opportunity for growth in Dedham Heath, outside of the National Landscape, it is more appropriate for Dedham Heath to be considered together with Dedham as a medium settlement.

Eight Ash Green

5.32 Eight Ash Green comprises three main areas of which two are considered sustainable and have a range of services and facilities: Eight Ash Green/Fordham Heath and Eight Ash Green /Choats Corner. Seven Star Green is not considered sustainable as it is located south of Halstead Road and is separated by this main road from the key facilities available in the village. Eight Ash Green is interspersed with open farmland and contains some small businesses premises. There are a number of local services including hairdressers, convenience store, petrol station, village hall, open spaces and primary school. Tollgate and Stane Park is located approximately 1.5km to the south-east.

Fordham

5.33 Fordham is a linear settlement with a core concentration of development which has evolved over time, including a number of small estate type developments. A primary school is situated at the southern end of the village just beyond the settlement boundary. The village hall hosts a shop and post office at limited times. Also within the village is a playing field and a community orchard maintained by the local community. A small cluster of dwellings to the north along Plummers Road is separated by the Grade II listed Moat Hall which is situated on a significant mature landscaped garden which adjoins an established community woodland managed by the Woodland Trust.

Great Horkesley

5.34 Great Horkesley is essentially linear in shape and has developed over time along the old Roman road that radiates away from north Colchester (now the A134). More recently development has spread westwards along a number of roads off the main road. Land to the east of the main road has remained relatively free of development and is more open in character. Great Horkesley is fragmented with the main core of the settlement to the south and two smaller fragments to the north along the A134. The southern edge of the main part of the village is approximately 0.6km from the Colchester urban edge and is located north of the A12. There are a range of services and facilities within the village.

Great Tey

5.35 Great Tey is situated north of the Roman River and is surrounded by largely flat arable land. The parish of Great Tey is a small rural community that contains a few local amenities including a village pub, a school, and a Norman church. The community originally developed at the southern end, as evidenced by the Conservation Area, with a newer small estate to the north and ribbon development along the main road through the village between Little Tey and Chappel.

Langham

5.36 Langham includes two areas of settlement, Langham Moor and St. Margaret's Cross, which are linked by School Road. Langham is located close to the A12, and the spatial strategy includes opportunities for growth along key transport corridors. A former WWII airfield lies between the two areas. The village contains a mixture of historic properties and farmhouses with more recent development. Langham contains a public house, a community café, a community shop, community centre, recreation ground, a playground, football pitches and tennis courts. Some constraints, including current capacity of the Water recycling centre and sewerage network, and capacity at the primary school, have potential to benefit from opportunities provided by substantial growth.

Laver de la Haye

5.37 Development in Laver de la Haye is concentrated within two settlement areas: Laver village and Malting Green. The two areas are physically separated by a large grass sward known as Malting Green, a large part of which is a designated Local Wildlife Site (Co 93). It is also an important open space that plays an important function in defining the rural character of the existing two settlement areas. Laver de la Haye has a mix of community and social infrastructure including a primary school, GP surgery, shop, two pubs, village hall and open spaces.

Rowhedge

5.38 Rowhedge lies within the parish of East Donyland, which covers the south-east of Colchester. The settlement was historically centred around the shipbuilding and fishing industries of the River Colne. The village lies on the opposite bank of the river to Wivenhoe but despite its close proximity to the town, access is only available by road through Colchester. Rowhedge has good public transport and road links to Colchester and contains its own primary school, post office and recreational facilities.

West Bergholt

5.39 West Bergholt is situated approximately 1km to the north-west of Colchester. The village is centered around a triangle of roads: the B1508 Colchester Road, Chapel Road and Lexden Road. West Bergholt is separated from Colchester by an area of open countryside and the valleys of St Botolph's Brook and the River Colne. The A12 bisects the open countryside between West Bergholt and Colchester. The majority of the more recent development, from allocations in the West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan, has occurred on the northern side of Colchester Road. There is potential for further development, including extending the boundaries of the neighbourhood plan allocations.

Small Settlements

Aldham

5.40 Aldham is a nucleated settlement that has developed around the junction of Brook Road/New Road and Green Lane/Tey Road with more modern development to the north-east and south-east. Aldham is rural in character and is accessed by narrow country lanes but is close to the A12/A120 and A1124.

5.41 The Preferred Options Local Plan allocates a site for approximately 15 dwellings at New Road.

Birch and Layer Breton

5.42 Birch Green is the largest area of housing within the wider Birch parish area (with the smaller historic core of Birch to the north and a separate, isolated cluster of dwellings known as Hardy's Green to the north-west). Birch Green is broadly triangular in shape where development has filled the space between Birch Street, Mill Lane and Straight Way, with some development extending beyond Mill Lane and Birch Street to the north and Crayes Green to the south-east. Birch Green is rural in character, has limited connections to the strategic road network but has a few key services including its own primary school and village hall.

5.43 The Preferred Options Local Plan allocates a site for approximately 15 dwellings at Birch Green.

Copford Green

5.44 Copford Green formed part of the Copford 'Sustainable Settlement' in the adopted Local Plan. However, it is separate from Copford with its own character and historic core and is more appropriate as one of Colchester's small villages.

Easthorpe

5.45 Easthorpe is a small settlement to the south-west of Copford, which has developed along an old Roman Road. The settlement is centred around Easthorpe Road, Well Lane and the Church.

East Mersea

5.46 East Mersea is a small, linear settlement situated on the eastern side of Mersea Island. It comprises a small cluster of dwellings and a limited range of community facilities. It is home to Cudmore Grove Country Park, which is very popular with visitors, especially at weekends. It is predominantly linear, with most dwellings located along East Road.

Fingringhoe

5.47 Fingringhoe is essentially a linear settlement comprised of two main residential areas that have developed either side of the historic core of Fingringhoe, which contains a primary school, church and public house.

5.48 The Preferred Options Local Plan allocates a site for approximately 5 dwellings at Picketts Farm.

Great Wigborough

5.49 Great and Little Wigborough were formally two parishes and have been combined into one. They are the two main settlements in the parish. They are both linear in form and are concentrated along Maldon Road, School Road and Peldon Road. Great and Little Wigborough are rural in character, poorly connected to the strategic road network and accessed by narrow country lanes.

Little Horkesley

5.50 Little Horkesley is a small, rural, linear settlement. It is located within the Dedham Vale National Landscape.

Messing

5.51 Messing is located north of Tiptree. Messing is rural and historic in character and is accessed by narrow country lanes. It is one of the few small villages with a primary school and has a pub, church and village hall.

5.52 The Preferred Options Local Plan allocates a site for approximately 25 dwellings and enhanced open space at Kelvedon Road.

Mount Bures

5.53 Mount Bures is a small, linear settlement bounded to the east by the railway line.

Peldon

5.54 Peldon is at the heart of the parish of Winstred Hundred and links Great Wigborough, Little Wigborough and Salcott. Housing in Peldon is laid out in a triangular pattern around three roads. The settlement boundary currently comprises two roughly equivalent areas of housing on either side of two of the three roads. The triangular residential area is surrounded by arable farms. The village lies within the Coastal Protection Belt.

5.55 The Preferred Options Local Plan allocates a site for approximately 25 dwellings and enhanced open space at St Ives Road.

Salcott cum Virley

5.56 Salcott cum Virley is a small, linear settlement. It is located within the coastal protection belt and a large part of the settlement lies within an area of high flood risk.

Wormingford

5.57 The main built-up area of Wormingford follows part of Main Road and then extends northwards along Church Road. Immediately to the north is a Local Wildlife Site and the Dedham Vale National Landscape is located to the east of the settlement.