

# Welcome

Thank you for visiting today and welcome to **Colchester City Council's Local Plan** (Regulation 18) exhibition. This emerging Local Plan is intended to replace our existing adopted Local Plan and has been prepared for public consultation. This draft is the 'Preferred Options Plan'. The consultation will run for 6 weeks.

## What is a Local Plan?

The Local Plan is our guide for the future of Colchester. It outlines where new housing (including affordable homes), jobs, open spaces and community facilities will go. It addresses key issues like health and wellbeing and climate change, it protects our open spaces, heritage and environment, and ensures we create sustainable growth for our city.

Local Plans must be reviewed regularly to keep up to date with Government policies and legislation and to ensure they stay relevant and effective.

A new Local Plan for Colchester must be produced by 2026 and will set out a blueprint for how the city will develop over the next 15 years to 2041.

In addition to the Local Plan itself, we are also consulting on a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). There are also a number of evidence base documents that support the plan.

## What has informed the local plan so far?

- Iterative, themed Issues and Options engagement
- The requirements of legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance
- The Local Plan evidence base
- Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment



## What is a Preferred Options Plan?

The Preferred Options Plan is an initial **draft plan** which reflects the evidence available to date. Some evidence will continue to be refined and emerge.

The Preferred Options Plan provides a set of proposed policies and allocations which we are now consulting on. **It does not represent a final plan**, and it is recognised that further work is necessary to arrive at the final plan.

**This consultation is part of that consideration.** People who live and work in Colchester, community groups and businesses are all encouraged to give their views to help shape the final plan.





# VISION AND STRATEGIC POLICIES

Local Plans are required to have a **Vision**. The early engagement we carried out as part of Issues and Options consultation has informed the Vision for the Local Plan.

The Local Plan includes Themes and Objectives which support the Vision.



## The Local Plan Vision:

Growth in Colchester is inevitable and brings with it change and opportunity. The Local Plan will embrace growth opportunities to meet the environmental, social and economic needs of the changing population and future generations.

In doing so it will improve the quality of life for our communities and create a better environment contributing to healthy lifestyles, maximising potential opportunities provided through well connected green networks.

It will also preserve and enhance Colchester's identity defined by its special diverse natural environment, green networks and waterways, prestigious heritage, varied arts and culture and welcoming inclusive, vibrant and healthy communities.



## The Local Plan is split into three key sections:

### Strategic Policies covering:

- **Health and Wellbeing** – ensuring that all proposals support the health and wellbeing of all our communities.
- **Environment and Green Network** – ensuring that all proposals conserve and enhance the natural and historic environment.
- **Spatial Strategy and Development in the Countryside** – the spatial strategy directs development to the most sustainable and accessible locations across Colchester.
- **Provision for Homes and Jobs** – ensuring enough land is allocated for homes and jobs to accommodate the predicted level of growth over the plan period.
- **Infrastructure and Connectivity** - ensuring that the delivery of homes and jobs are supported by the provision of appropriate new and upgraded infrastructure including transport, community facilities and utilities.
- **Place Shaping Principles** – emphasises the importance of creating spaces that enhance social interaction and respect the unique character, natural environment and heritage of Colchester.

### Development Management Policies covering:

- Natural and Historic Environment
- Green Network and Waterways
- Landscape and Coast
- Net Zero Homes and Buildings, Renewable Energy and Water
- Economy
- Housing Need and Standards
- Community and Social Infrastructure
- Place and Connectivity

**Place Policies** – which include the proposed site allocations for each settlement



# SPATIAL STRATEGY AND SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY

A key part of developing the Local Plan is to ensure that development is provided in the most appropriate locations.

The Preferred Options **Spatial Strategy** ensures protection and enhancement of the most sensitive environments and directs growth to three primary areas:

- The existing urban area and identified growth and opportunity areas within it.
- Strategic scale growth along transport corridors.
- Existing settlements, including some of Colchester's smaller villages, to support communities and provide opportunities to sustain and enhance facilities and infrastructure.

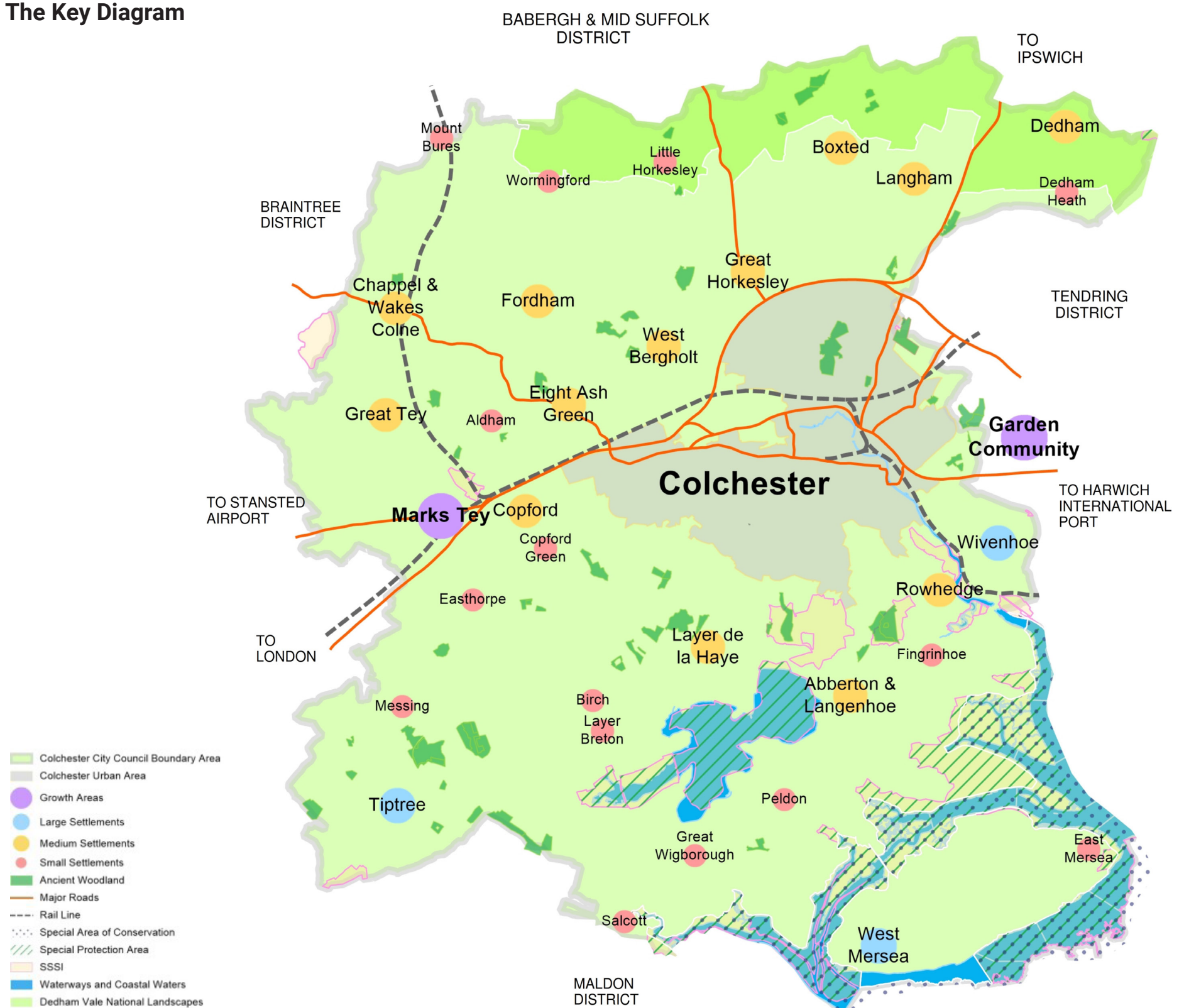
## The Settlement Hierarchy

A Settlement Hierarchy is included in the Preferred Options Plan. The Settlement Hierarchy reflects the Spatial Strategy.

## The Key Diagram

The key diagram illustrates the Spatial Strategy. It shows important assets and designations within the district as well as the settlement hierarchy.

## The Key Diagram







# HOW MUCH GROWTH ARE WE PLANNING FOR?

We now need to plan for growth for homes and jobs for the plan period 2026 to 2041. Central Government set official housing targets and have told us we need land to build 20,800 new homes by 2041 – that’s 1,300 per annum. We have approximately 10,000 in the ‘pipeline’ leaving at least 10,800 still to be allocated in the new Local Plan. The draft Local Plan has allocated land for 11,089 new homes.

Housing Supply as at 31st December 2024	Net New Homes
Existing Commitments (sites with planning permission)	6,117
Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community (within the plan period)	1,700
Windfall Allowance (sites not specifically identified in the Local Plan)	2,200
Local Plan Allocations	11,089
TOTAL SUPPLY	21,106

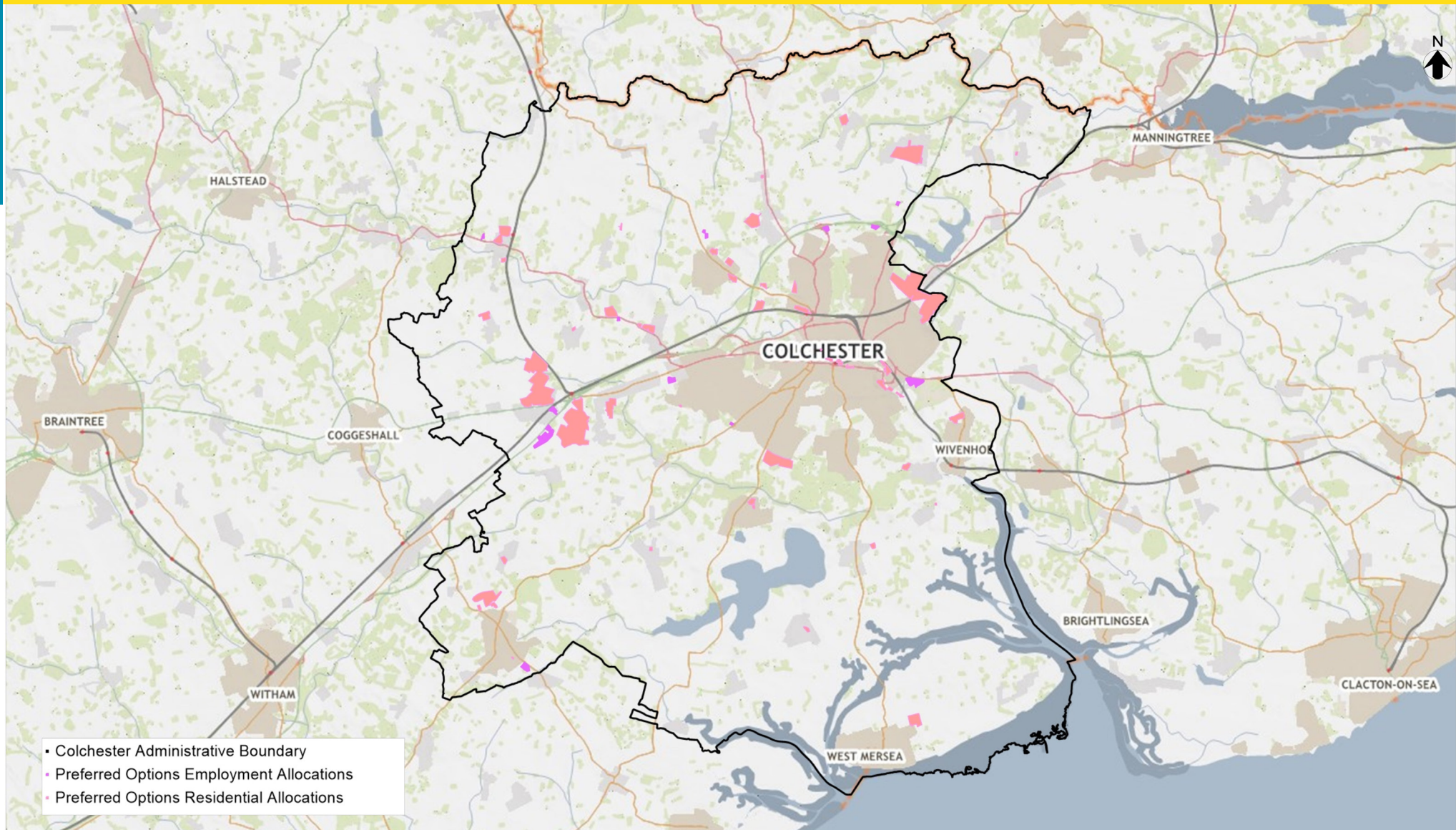
**The Local Plan also needs to meet future employment needs by providing additional employment allocations.**

The Employment Evidence has informed the amount and type of employment floorspace required by assessing existing supply and demand for jobs. The Preferred Options Local Plan allocates land for at least 41.7 hectares of land. This includes some sites that have been carried forward from the adopted Local Plan.





# ALLOCATIONS



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The Preferred Options Local Plan includes a set of allocations to meet the identified needs for homes and jobs. The allocations have been subject to thorough assessment to determine their sustainability and suitability for residential uses.

The Place Policies in the Preferred Options Local Plan provide detail on specific new allocations along with further information on infrastructure improvements and mitigation measures required to address site constraints and opportunities at each location.





The Local Plan also includes Development Management Policies. All planning applications will be considered against these policies to ensure that they provide what is needed while protecting what matters most.

## ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN NETWORK

Colchester's rich landscapes, diverse wildlife and deep cultural heritage make it a truly special place. From rolling countryside to stunning coastlines, our natural and historic environment shapes the identity of our communities.

Our heritage, countryside and coast are vital for:

- Biodiversity & wildlife conservation
- Historic landmarks & archaeology
- Agriculture & local food production
- Tourism, leisure & recreation

Colchester is committed not just to protecting its environment and landscapes but also to enhancing them, ensuring environmental net gain for future generations.

Through sustainable policies, we will preserve, enhance and celebrate Colchester's natural beauty, open spaces and cultural heritage, keeping it vibrant for residents and visitors alike.

Let's cherish and protect what makes Colchester unique!



These policies will contribute towards the theme in the vision of healthy, vibrant and diverse places by protecting, maintaining and enhancing the distinct character, heritage identity and setting of Colchester city and protecting stretches of undeveloped countryside, enhancing the quality of the natural environment creating net gains to biodiversity.



## NET ZERO HOMES AND BUILDINGS, RENEWABLE ENERGY AND WATER

Colchester is committed to net zero carbon development, building a future that is greener, cleaner and more energy-efficient. Our approach aligns with climate targets and the best practices set by front runner authorities in England and leading industry-led initiatives.

Let's build a smarter, more sustainable Colchester!

This chapter will contribute towards the Sustainable theme of the vision by requiring greater standards for sustainable infrastructure and wastewater; facilitating affordable clean secure energy through the delivery of sustainable energy to achieve radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; and ensuring development helps Colchester to adapt and increase its resilience to the effects of climate change. Policies will create healthier homes and reduce fuel poverty, which are important considerations for health and wellbeing.





## HOMES

Colchester is growing and so are its housing needs. A balanced approach to development ensures that everyone has a place to call home, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

New housing developments must cater to a wide range of households, from families and single-person homes to older residents, students, families and those with care needs. We are committed to providing affordable housing, self-build opportunities and housing for gypsy & traveller communities.

By ensuring a mix of housing types, we can build strong, vibrant and connected communities where everyone belongs.

**Let's create homes that work for all of Colchester's residents!**



**The policies in this chapter will contribute to the themes of the vision of 'Healthy, Vibrant and diverse places' that support both the health and wellbeing of individuals and the long-term sustainability of the area, providing a range of high-quality, healthy homes that meet the diverse needs of residents.**



## ECONOMY

Strong economies build strong communities! National Planning Policy prioritises economic growth and productivity, ensuring that places are designed to support businesses, jobs and local prosperity.

Planning policies focus on removing barriers to investment, identifying strategic development sites and ensuring businesses have the space and resources to flourish.

A thriving economy isn't just about cities, rural communities matter too! Policies encourage sustainable growth in the countryside, supporting local businesses, agriculture and tourism.

Town, district and local centres are the heartbeat of local life. By strengthening their role, planning policies help create lively, connected and resilient communities where people live, work and shop.

**Smart planning today means sustainable economic success tomorrow. Let's build a future of opportunity, innovation, and inclusive growth!**

**The policies in this chapter will contribute to the themes of the vision of 'Welcoming inclusive communities' and 'Healthy Vibrant and Diverse Places' by delivering high value jobs for local people, protecting and maintaining the distinct character, identity and setting of Colchester city and supporting Colchester's tourism role through the provision of additional high-quality facilities.**





## PLACE AND CONNECTIVITY

The places we live, work, and gather shape our lives. Sustainable, inclusive and well-designed spaces don't just look good, they enhance health, wellbeing and safety for everyone. Thoughtful planning helps combat climate change, encourage active lifestyles and create safer, more accessible environments where people thrive.

From homes to public spaces, every element of our surroundings influences how we move, connect, and even what we eat. A well-connected and vibrant public realm fosters social interaction, physical activity and overall wellbeing.

National planning policies are committed to healthy, inclusive and safe places, where communities can connect, grow and lead healthier lives.

**Let's build a future where every place works for everyone!**

**The policies in this chapter will contribute towards all the themes of the vision by creating healthy, vibrant and diverse places that are sustainable, inclusive and well connected.**



## COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

To thrive, every community needs the right infrastructure. Social and community facilities are the backbone of vibrant, healthy places, ensuring that residents have access to everything they need for a fulfilling life.

Policies ensure that essential services, such as healthcare, sports, education and emergency services are properly located and supported to enhance the physical, mental and social wellbeing of all.

This chapter focuses on the key areas of infrastructure that make our communities thrive:

- Community Facilities
- Sports & Recreation
- Education & Schools
- Health & Medical Services
- Emergency Services
- Cultural & Civic Spaces

With thoughtful planning, we will create places where people can connect, stay healthy and lead active, fulfilling lives.

**Let's build the strong foundations for thriving, connected communities!**



The policies within the Plan are designed to align with the Council's overarching vision of creating healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities. This vision prioritises health and wellbeing, environmental protection and inclusivity, ensuring that all proposals contribute positively to improving the quality of life for residents while safeguarding the city's unique natural and cultural assets.





# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The purpose of this strategic policy is to ensure that all proposals support the health and wellbeing of all our communities. In line with the NPPF, the policy aims to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places, enabling and supporting healthy lives and reducing health inequalities. All developments of 50+ units will require a Health Impact Assessment as per Policy ST1.



The way places are planned, designed, and built has a significant impact on people's health and wellbeing. With this in mind, health and wellbeing considerations have been integrated throughout the policies of the Colchester Local Plan.

## PLACE AND CONNECTIVITY

- Healthier Food Environments improve access to affordable, nutritious food, helping reduce obesity, diabetes and other chronic illnesses.
- Active and Sustainable Travel promote physical activity, reduce reliance on private vehicles, and improve air quality.
- Parking or restricting parking and prioritising alternative modes of transport can promote healthier lifestyles by encouraging active travel and reducing air pollution.
- Design and Amenity promotes active lifestyles, reduces health inequalities and supports mental wellbeing by creating safe, inclusive and engaging environments.

## ECONOMY

- Access to employment provides not only financial stability but also contributes to mental health and social inclusion, fostering a sense of purpose, identity and community connection.
- Access to leisure offers opportunities for physical activity, relaxation, and social interaction, which reduce stress, improve mental wellbeing and promote healthier lifestyles.

## ENVIRONMENT

- Biodiversity net gain creates more access to nature-rich spaces, which are proven to reduce stress, improve mental health, and encourage physical activity.
- Open spaces provide opportunities for physical activity, relaxation and social interaction, contributing to improved physical health, reduced stress and better mental wellbeing.
- Coastal Areas offer unique opportunities for physical activity, relaxation and mental rejuvenation through beach walks, water sports and access to nature.
- Renewable Energy and access to clean, affordable energy contributes to household comfort, reduced fuel poverty and mental wellbeing.

## COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- Retention and Enhancement of Community facilities enhance social interaction, provide opportunities for physical activity and support mental health.
- Education Provision excellence impacts on factors associated with positive wellbeing, including quality of life.
- Sports Provision provides opportunities for physical activity and social interaction, contributing to improved physical health, reduced stress and better mental wellbeing.

## HOMES

- Energy Efficient Homes improve indoor environmental quality resulting in general health improvements and better quality of life and mental health.
- Affordable housing is a key social determinant of health, as it impacts factors like mental health, physical wellbeing, and social stability.





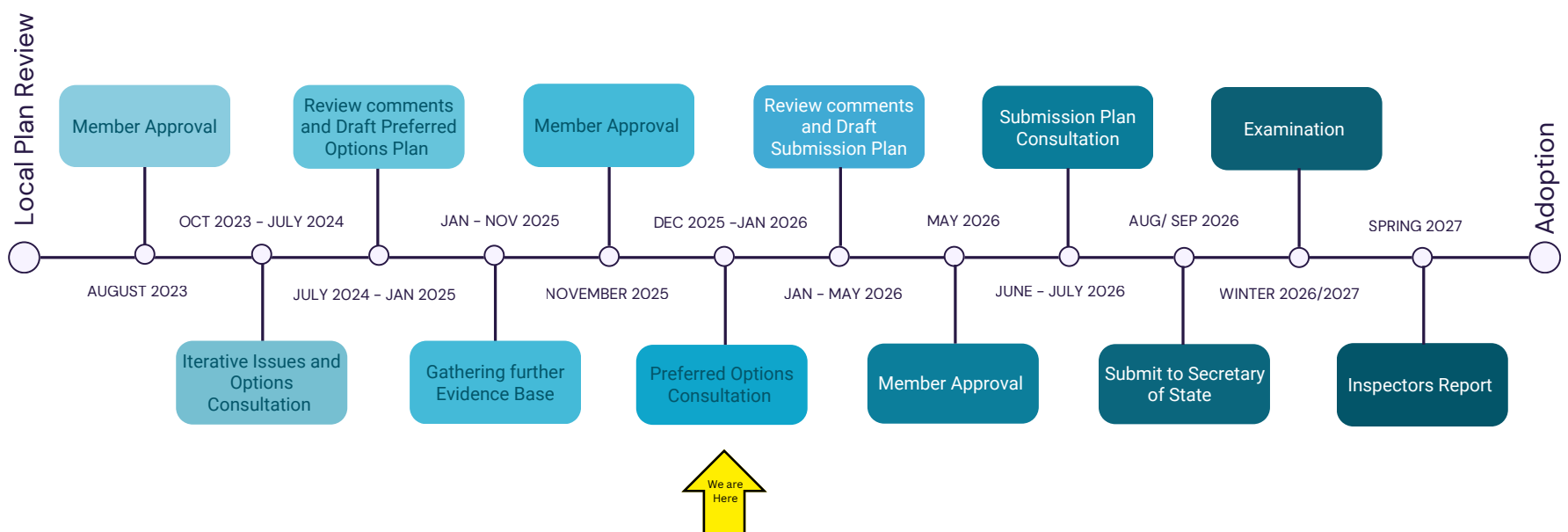
# HOW TO GET INVOLVED

This is your opportunity to shape Colchester's future, we want to hear from YOU. What do you think about these ideas? Would you suggest any different options? What are your priorities for Colchester in the years ahead? Your feedback is essential. It will help ensure that the final plan reflects the needs and aspirations of everyone in our community.



View the full Preferred Options Document on the consultation portal or visit our website: [colchester.gov.uk/NewLocalPlan](https://colchester.gov.uk/NewLocalPlan)

Visit our in-person exhibition at Colchester Town Hall  
 Wednesday **10 December** (4pm-7pm) - Old Library  
 Saturday **13 December** (10am-2pm) - Grand Jury Room  
 Monday **15 December** (10am-2pm) - Grand Jury Room



## NEXT STEPS

We will consider all comments made alongside further evidence based studies to finalise the 'Submission Local Plan' which will be available for public consultation in summer 2026.



**Get involved!**  
 Visit our website to learn more  
 and share your thoughts:  
[colchester.gov.uk/NewLocalPlan](https://colchester.gov.uk/NewLocalPlan)

