

Abberton and Langenhoe Parish Council Consultation Response to the Colchester City Council Preferred Options Local Plan Regulation 18

Summary Comments on specific policies in the plan

Policies ST2–ST4 (Environment, Spatial Strategy, Countryside)

The Parish Council strongly supports Policies ST2, ST3 and ST4, which seek to protect the environment, countryside, and settlement character. The coastal and landscape setting of Abberton and Langenhoe is a defining asset and must not be harmed by development. The Council is particularly concerned that changes to settlement boundaries risk harmful coalescence with Fingringhoe, which would undermine village identity and landscape separation.

Policy ST5: Colchester's Housing Need

The Parish Council accepts the proposed allocation of up to 50 dwellings for Abberton and Langenhoe as a reasonable maximum contribution. However, concern remains that amended settlement boundaries could enable additional unallocated development beyond this figure, particularly on land adjacent to PP25, which would be strongly opposed.

Policy ST7: Infrastructure Delivery and Impact Mitigation

The Parish Council has serious concerns about infrastructure capacity. Water, wastewater, transport, education, health, and community facilities must be delivered in step with development. Local primary school capacity is near full, secondary schools are distant, and transport links are already overstretched, particularly due to traffic from Mersea. Without firm infrastructure delivery, further growth risks overloading existing services and harming community wellbeing.

Summary Comments for Policy PP25: View Park, Abberton and Langenhoe

The Parish Council supports PP25 as the preferred site for Abberton and Langenhoe, subject to:

- the site boundary being correctly defined and development not extending beyond it.
- Stronger policy wording is required to ensure safe, continuous, adoptable pedestrian connections to the existing village footway network.
- Existing mature trees, hedgerows, and historic field boundaries must be retained through mandatory wording.
- Development must not proceed without confirmed wastewater treatment capacity at Fingringhoe Sewage Treatment Works, with appropriate phasing.
- The policy should also require assessment and mitigation of primary healthcare capacity to ensure infrastructure keeps pace with growth.

Policy PP23: Land East of Dawes Lane, West Mersea

The Parish Council is concerned that the proposed development of around 300 dwellings at West Mersea will significantly increase traffic through Abberton and Langenhoe, particularly along the B1025. Existing footpaths, crossings, and traffic calming are inadequate, and increased use of minor rural roads as alternative routes will exacerbate safety and congestion issues.

Full response details can be found below:

Abberton and Langenhoe Parish Council full Consultation Response

Policy ST2: Environment and the Green Network and Waterways

We strongly support this policy because our village environment is most important to us and is recognised by the Coastal Protection Zone designation which should not be impacted by development. We live here to enjoy the landscape and environment of the coast.

Policy ST3: Spatial Strategy

We strongly support this policy, and in respect of Abberton and Langenhoe are greatly concerned that the proposed extension of the village envelope along the Fingringhoe Road, beyond the proposed new allocation, will cause "harmful coalescence" with Fingringhoe.

Policy ST4: Development in the Countryside

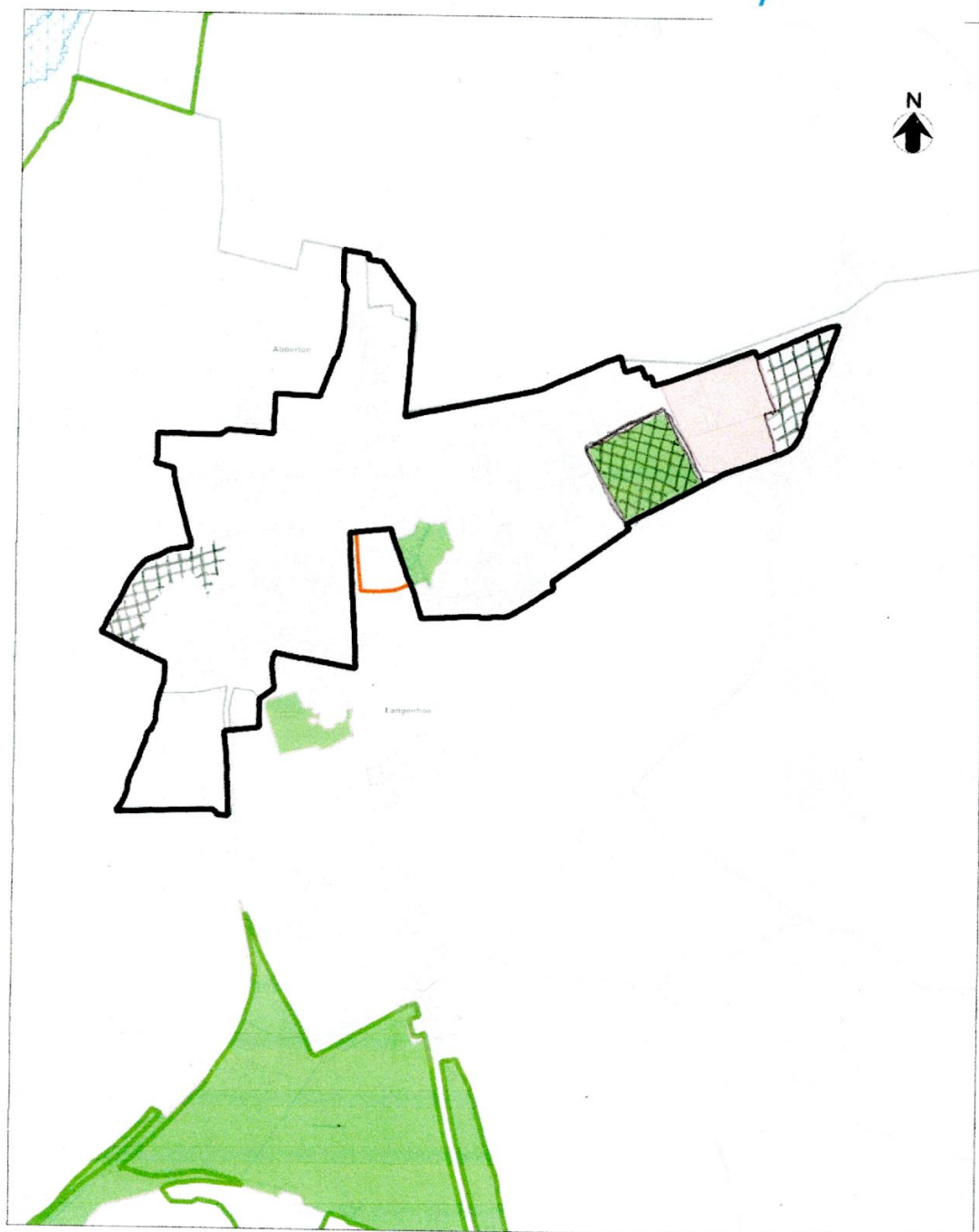
We strongly support this policy, in assisting to protect the important landscape setting of Abberton and Langenhoe.

Policy ST5: Colchester's Housing Need

We recognise that the City has been given national government development quotas, and we accept that our allocation of 50 dwellings is a reasonable maximum. However, we are very concerned that the proposed changes to the settlement boundaries could allow additional unallocated development beyond these 50 dwellings on the land adjacent to Park View (PP25), which we would object to.

We are also concerned about the land adjacent to Glebe Lane and the Cricket Ground (shown in the hatched areas on the attached map), which has likewise been added into the settlement boundary. Any future development on these sites would be strongly opposed by the parish council.

ABBERTON & LANGENHOE



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Policy ST7: Infrastructure Delivery and Impact Mitigation

In common with other settlements, ALPC have great concerns over infrastructure generally. We ask that this as a subject heading be included in the Local Plan. All the essential resources and this includes water, sewage, power, transport, schools, medical and recreational facilities are needed to create a successful community. The alternative is a failure of the existing services to cope thus endangering the lifestyle quality of our present communities. For our parish we would particularly highlight the following:

1. Langenhoe Community Primary School is virtually full. Some 80% of the pupils are from outside the villages, which notwithstanding causes extensive traffic congestion during school terms.
2. The closest secondary schooling, Thomas Lord Audley School is several miles from villages of Abberton and Langenhoe. Development in the surrounding settlements will significantly increase demand for school transport particularly in respect of children of secondary school age from Mersea (PP23) with some 300 dwellings anticipated.
3. Transport links are poor and increasingly overloaded by car ownership and holiday traffic from Mersea together with bicycle use on inadequate roads and lack of footpaths

Parish Council Consultation Response – Policy PP25: View Park, Abberton and Langenhoe

a. Number of dwellings

We consider this site to be the preferred option; on condition it does not extend beyond the coloured area and the village boundary is corrected to reflect this.

b. Site access

No access should be considered from the east of the site, as sight lines would destroy this "country lane" approach separating our parish from Fingringhoe and affecting the setting of the listed buildings in this area.

c. Pedestrian Access & Connectivity

The Parish Council has reviewed the pedestrian access wording within Policy PP25 and is concerned that the current text is not strong enough to guarantee the delivery of paved, continuous, and safe pedestrian routes connecting the development to the existing village footway network.

The current policy states:

“c. Provide a safe pedestrian access to ensure connectivity within and throughout the site to existing footways and any Public Rights of Way. Ensure provision of green infrastructure connections and recreational access to the countryside particularly to the north of the site, also securing active travel links and connections to the settlement.”

While well-intentioned, this wording is too general and lacks the specificity required to ensure that:

- pedestrian routes are paved and all-weather,
- connections to the existing village footway network are delivered,
- off-site improvements are provided where necessary,
- routes meet adoptable standards,
- and active travel links are safe, direct, and usable year-round.

Without clearer requirements, there is a significant risk that the developer could satisfy the policy through minimal or informal measures (e.g., grass paths, permissive routes, or reliance on narrow rural lanes), which would not meet the needs of residents or support safe access to village services.

To ensure the policy is effective and enforceable, the Parish Council requests that the following strengthened wording be added to PP25:

“c. Development must provide continuous, safe, and fully surfaced pedestrian routes throughout the site and connecting directly to the existing village footway network. These routes must be constructed to adoptable standards, be suitable for year-round use, and comply with Essex Design Guide and national active travel standards. Where existing off-site footway links are incomplete or substandard, the development must deliver or fund the necessary off-site improvements to ensure safe, direct, and accessible pedestrian connections to the wider settlement.”

This strengthened wording is essential to:

- ensure genuine integration with the existing village,
- support safe walking routes to local services and bus stops,
- reduce car dependency,
- meet active travel objectives, and
- ensure that pedestrian infrastructure is delivered to a standard appropriate for long-term use.

The Parish Council strongly urges the City Council to adopt this revised wording to ensure PP25 delivers safe, accessible, and high-quality pedestrian connectivity for both new and existing residents.

d. Mature trees and hedgerows

The Parish Council welcomes the intention within PP25 to protect existing natural features. However, we have significant concerns that the current wording of criterion (d) is not strong enough to ensure that these important landscape and ecological assets are genuinely safeguarded.

The use of the word “should” is advisory rather than mandatory. In planning terms, this creates ambiguity and allows developers to justify the removal of mature trees and hedgerows on the basis of layout preferences, engineering constraints, or arboricultural assessments that favour clearance over retention. This risks the permanent loss of features that are central to the rural character and ecological value of Abberton and Langenhoe.

Rationale for Strengthening PP25(d)

1. “Should” is not enforceable

In planning policy, “should” is interpreted as guidance, not a requirement.

This means:

- the Council cannot insist on retention
- developers can argue that removal is acceptable
- enforcement becomes extremely difficult
- the policy fails the test of effectiveness required by the NPPF

Replacing “should” with “must” or “will be required to” is essential for enforceability.

2. Mature trees and hedgerows are irreplaceable

These features:

- define the rural character of the villages
- provide long-established ecological value
- support wildlife corridors
- contribute to carbon storage and climate resilience
- form historic field boundaries

New planting cannot replicate these functions for decades.

3. National policy requires strong protection

The NPPF requires planning policies to:

- protect and enhance valued landscapes
- retain existing natural features
- avoid the loss of irreplaceable habitats except in wholly exceptional circumstances

The current PP25 wording does not meet this standard.

4. Weak wording risks avoidable loss during construction

Without explicit protection:

- trees can be removed during site clearance
- hedgerows can be breached for access
- construction works can damage root protection areas
- “accidental” loss becomes common and irreversible

A stronger policy gives the Council a clear basis for conditions and enforcement.

5. Strengthening PP25(d) aligns with other Local Plan policies

Other policies in the emerging Local Plan emphasise:

- biodiversity net gain
- green infrastructure
- landscape character
- climate resilience

PP25 should reflect this wider policy framework.

Proposed Strengthened Wording for PP25(d)

The Parish Council requests that criterion (d) be replaced with the following:

“All mature trees, hedgerows and historic field boundaries within the site must be retained and incorporated into the layout as key landscape and ecological features. Development proposals must demonstrate how these assets will be protected during construction and integrated into the site’s green infrastructure network. Loss of mature trees or hedgerows will only be permitted in wholly exceptional circumstances and must be clearly justified and mitigated.”

This strengthened wording:

- removes ambiguity
- ensures retention is the starting point, not an optional preference
- protects the rural character of the area
- supports biodiversity net gain
- aligns PP25 with national policy and the Local Plan’s wider objectives

Conclusion

The Parish Council strongly urges the City Council to adopt the strengthened wording above. This will ensure that PP25 delivers high-quality, landscape-led development that respects the rural character of Abberton and Langenhoe and protects the mature natural features that are central to the identity and ecological value of the area.

h,i,j. Wastewater & WRC Capacity

The Parish Council supports the inclusion of wastewater requirements within Policy PP25. However, we consider that points h, i and j require strengthening to ensure that development does not proceed ahead of confirmed wastewater treatment capacity.

The Colchester Water Cycle Study (2025) refers to a “Fingringhoe WRC” when assessing wastewater capacity for Abberton, Langenhoe, Peldon and Fingringhoe. While we accept this terminology within the Study, the wastewater asset serving these settlements is correctly described as a Sewage Treatment Works (STW). For policy clarity and enforceability, PP25 should therefore reference Fingringhoe STW.

This is important because the Colchester Water Cycle Study (2025) identifies the Fingringhoe catchment as being at its permitted discharge limit, requiring a new permit and AMP8 investment before accommodating further growth. PP25 must reflect this constraint to ensure the policy is sound and effective.

Recommended Revised Wording (Based on Original Points h, i and j)

h. Confirmation of treatment capacity

Applicants must demonstrate that they have obtained formal written confirmation from Anglian Water Services that sufficient treatment capacity is available at Fingringhoe Sewage Treatment Works (STW) to serve the development at the point of anticipated connection. Where capacity is not currently available,

appropriate phasing triggers must be agreed with Anglian Water and the Council to ensure that no occupation occurs ahead of the required upgrades at Fingringhoe STW.

i. Adequate wastewater management and phasing

Applicants must demonstrate that adequate capacity exists within both the foul sewer network and Fingringhoe STW to manage the wastewater flows from the development. Where upgrades or alternative solutions are required, these must be agreed with Anglian Water and the Council, and development must be phased to align with the delivery of the necessary infrastructure.

j. Measures to reduce loading on Fingringhoe STW

In addition to prioritising SuDS (Policy EN8) and water-efficiency measures, development proposals must incorporate measures to reduce the impact of planned growth on the capacity of Fingringhoe STW, including:

- *Removal of unrequired or historic network flows.*
- *Targeted education for new residents on water-efficient behaviours.*
- *Design measures that reduce demand for potable water and minimise wastewater generation.*

Rationale

1. Alignment with the Water Cycle Study

The WCS identifies the Fingringhoe catchment as the relevant drainage area for PP25. Referring to the correct asset type (STW) ensures policy clarity without contradicting the Study.

2. Ensuring enforceability

The original wording allows developers to rely on general assurances. The revised wording requires formal written confirmation from Anglian Water and ties phasing to the delivery of actual infrastructure.

3. Protecting the Colne Estuary

Fingringhoe STW discharges directly to the Colne Estuary, a highly sensitive environment. Ensuring no increase in pollutant load is essential to avoid harm to SSSI, SPA, Ramsar and SAC designations.

4. Preventing premature occupation

The strengthened wording ensures that homes cannot be occupied until the necessary wastewater infrastructure is operational, not merely “planned”.

Conclusion

The Parish Council strongly urges the City Council to amend PP25 to reference Fingringhoe Sewage Treatment Works (STW) and adopt the strengthened wording above for points h, i and j. This will ensure that wastewater capacity is properly assessed that development is phased appropriately, and that the environmental sensitivity of the Colne Estuary is fully protected.

Health and Primary Care Infrastructure (addition)

The Parish Council has significant concerns that Policy PP25 does not contain any reference to primary healthcare capacity, despite the clear requirement in the current NPPF for Local Plans to plan positively for all forms of infrastructure, including health.

1. Evidence of Primary Care Pressure

Residents of Abberton, Langenhoe, Fingringhoe and Peldon are primarily served by:

- Malting Green Surgery (a small rural practice with limited estate capacity)

- Layer Road and Rowhedge Surgeries (suburban practices already serving a large population)
- Other south-Colchester practices operating at or near capacity

There is no GP surgery within Abberton or Langenhoe, and the practices that do serve the area have limited physical space for expansion. Growth from PP25 and surrounding areas will increase list sizes and intensify pressure on already constrained premises.

2. Requirement for Primary Care Assessment

The Local Plan is currently silent on primary care for PP25. This is inconsistent with:

- The NPPF (infrastructure must be deliverable)
- The NHS Suffolk & North East Essex ICB Estates Strategy
- Standard practice in other Local Plans across Essex and the wider region

3. Proposed Strengthened Wording for PP25

The Parish Council requests that the following wording be added to PP25:

k. Planning applications for this site must be accompanied by a Primary Care Capacity Assessment prepared in consultation with the NHS Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the relevant Primary Care Network. The Assessment must quantify the additional patient demand arising from the development and its impact on existing GP practices serving Abberton, Langenhoe and surrounding villages.

l. Applications must include formal written confirmation from the ICB that the additional demand can be accommodated within existing or committed GP premises, or that a funded and deliverable scheme is in place to provide the necessary additional capacity.

m. Where additional primary care capacity is required, development will only be permitted where appropriate mitigation has been secured, which may include financial contributions, land for premises expansion, or provision of on-site or branch surgery accommodation, as agreed with the Council and the ICB.

n. No dwelling shall be occupied until the Council has confirmed, in consultation with the ICB, that sufficient primary care capacity is available to serve the development.

4. Conclusion

Without explicit primary care requirements, PP25 risks delivering housing without the necessary GP capacity to support it. The Parish Council strongly urges the inclusion of the above wording to ensure the policy is effective, enforceable, and aligned with national policy.

Policy PP23: Land East Dawes Lane, West Mersea

PP23. The continual growth in traffic originating from Mersea where it is likely there will be 300 additional houses built will significantly affect Abberton and Langenhoe, notably along the B1025, where footpaths, pedestrian crossings, and speed control measures are insufficient. Additionally, minor roads experience excessive usage as alternative routes towards Colchester and the A12.