
Land at Colchester Road, West Bergholt

Reg 18 Representations on behalf of Mr S Laver

Call for Sites Reference: 10615



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Purpose

These representations, prepared by Stanfords Colchester LLP, are submitted on behalf of Mr S Laver in relation to land at Colchester Road, West Bergholt, which forms part of draft allocation PP44 in the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan and has site ID-10615.

The purpose of these representations is to:

- Confirm our client's support in principle for the allocation of PP44 and the delivery of new homes at West Bergholt, including the 25-dwelling scheme on land at Colchester Road;
- Demonstrate how the emerging proposals for the site already align with many of the plan's objectives; including high-quality, landscape-led design, protection of settlement separation, biodiversity net gain, and active and sustainable travel;
- Explain recommended alterations to the draft policy of PP44 to reflect the site's current context and deliverability;
- Highlight where the draft policies, as currently worded, risk placing disproportionate and duplicative technical and procedural burdens on small and medium-sized allocated sites, which could undermine viability, delay delivery and conflict with national policy requirements for proportionality; and
- Recommend targeted modifications to ensure that the plan is positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy, particularly in respect of:
 - The extent and type of technical reports required;
 - The layering of overlapping standards and assessments; and
 - The way generic policies are applied to specific allocated sites such as PP44.

In summary, these representations seek to ensure that the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan provides a clear, proportionate and deliverable policy framework within which the land at Colchester Road can come forward promptly to deliver much-needed new homes, while still securing the environmental, design and infrastructure outcomes the Council is seeking.

The Site

The site comprises a broadly triangular parcel of land on the south-eastern edge of West Bergholt, fronting Colchester Road (B1508) which was provided the site ID-10615 within the Call for Sites. It sits immediately adjacent to the existing settlement boundary and forms part of the wider allocation PP44, which is identified in the emerging Local Plan for approximately 100 dwellings. The land withing Mr S Laver's control at Colchester Road is intended to deliver up to 25 of those homes as a contained, landscape-led extension to the village.

The land is currently in agricultural use. It falls gently southwards from Colchester Road towards Albany Road, with the lowest point in the southern corner. The vast majority of the boundaries comprise mature trees and hedgerows, giving the site an enclosed, well-screened character that reflects the "woody" identity of West Bergholt described in the Village Design Statement. The north-western boundary has the least established planting and some inter-visibility with adjacent rear gardens.

Built development around the site is mixed. Along Colchester Road, the immediate context includes a range of red-brick buildings, most notably the converted former Truman Brewery (listed) and associated apartments opposite the site, together with Nos. 129 and 131 which flank the existing field access. Along Albany Road to the south, the boundary is formed by a run of predominantly bungalow-scale dwellings. This existing pattern of development encloses the site on three sides and means it reads as part of the village envelope rather than open countryside between West Bergholt and Braiswick.

Vehicular access is via an existing agricultural field entrance between 129 and 131 Colchester Road. Colchester Road benefits from lit footways on both sides at this point, providing direct pedestrian links westwards into the village centre and eastwards towards Braiswick and Colchester. A bus stop is located directly opposite the access, offering regular services to surrounding destinations. There are a wide range of facilities including primary school, GP, pharmacy, post office, convenience stores, takeaways, pub, church, playing fields and community hall within approximately 10–20 minutes' walk of the site, confirming its highly sustainable location.

Site 10615 below:

Policy ST1: Health and Wellbeing

While we support the principle that planning should consider health and wellbeing, the specific requirement in ST1 that:

“A Health Impact Assessment will be required for all residential development in excess of 50 units ... in order to demonstrate that the development would have an acceptable impact on health and wellbeing.”

is unfairly onerous, duplicative and unjustified.

1. Disproportionate and paperwork-heavy: Requiring a standalone Health Impact Assessment for every scheme above 50 dwellings risks becoming yet another piece of “tick-box” paperwork, rather than a meaningful planning tool. For most schemes at, or only modestly above, these thresholds:

- The health and wellbeing implications are already captured within Planning Statements and Design and Access Statements, through consideration of access to services, open space, active travel, noise and other existing requirements.
- Any specific localised issues (e.g. air quality, contamination, noise) are dealt with via the existing suite of technical reports.

ST1 does not explain why these existing mechanisms are insufficient, nor why a further, separate document is needed on top of them. This is directly at odds with national policy guidance that information requirements should be kept to the minimum necessary and be proportionate to the nature and scale of development.

2. No clear “marker” for acceptable impact: The policy requires that an HIA must “demonstrate that the development would have an acceptable impact on health and wellbeing” and must set out how positive health benefits will be maximised and negative impacts avoided or mitigated. However, ST1:

- Provides no clear marker or benchmark as to what constitutes an “acceptable” health impact;
- Does not identify which methodology or assessment framework is to be used; and
- Offers no guidance on how the findings of an HIA would be weighed against other planning considerations, particularly on allocated sites where the principle of development is already established.

Without clear criteria, there is a real risk that HIA becomes a highly subjective exercise, producing lengthy narrative documents whose conclusions are difficult to challenge but add little to the robustness of decision-making. This undermines the effectiveness of the policy, as applicants cannot know in advance what is required to pass the “acceptable impact” test.

3. Risk of delay and double-counting on allocated sites: For allocated sites, including PP44 and its western parcel, many of the health-related issues are already picked up through:

- The spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy;
- Policies on open space, green networks, walking/cycling, design, climate and pollution; and

- The detailed site allocation criteria.

To then impose a mandatory HIA threshold risks double-counting the same issues and introducing another potential reason to delay determination or request further iterations of a document, without any clear added value. This sits uneasily with the plan's reliance on allocations to deliver housing in a timely manner and risks making the plan ineffective in practice.

To be justified and proportionate, we request that ST1 is amended to:

1. Limit mandatory HIAs to strategic-scale development where there is clear potential for significant health impacts (e.g. new settlements, major urban extensions), not all schemes above 50 units / 1,000sqm; and/or
2. Recast the requirement so that: "Health and wellbeing considerations should be addressed in proportion to the scale and nature of the proposal, typically within the Planning Statement and/or Design and Access Statement. A separate Health Impact Assessment will only be required where the development is of a strategic scale or where the Council can demonstrate that significant health impacts are likely and that an HIA is necessary to assess them."; and,
3. Provide supporting text that clearly sets out:
 - The circumstances in which an HIA will be requested;
 - The methodology or framework to be used; and
 - How its conclusions will be taken into account alongside other material considerations.

Without these changes, ST1 introduces an additional, loosely defined document requirement that is likely to increase cost and delay for applicants, without clear evidence that it will improve outcomes over and above what is already achieved through existing policies, planning statements and design documents.

Policy ST2: Environmental and Green Network and Waterways

We support the objective of securing an integrated green network; this is already reflected in the work being undertaken to deliver the western parcel of PP44 through retained and enhanced boundary vegetation, on-site public open space and SuDS that are integrated with landscape and biodiversity functions.

However, the policy appears to assume that separate “green network and waterways” plans will be required for all major schemes. For smaller allocated sites such as PP44, the same outcomes can be secured through a well-structured landscape, ecology and SuDS package, without a further stand-alone “Green Network and Waterways Plan”. Requiring multiple near-duplicate documents risks a tick-box approach, adds cost, and may delay the delivery of housing on an allocation that the Local Plan relies upon.

To be justified and effective, we request that ST2 and its supporting text confirm that:

- The requirement for a specific “plan” will be applied proportionately; and
- For allocated sites, the green network can be demonstrated through existing drawings and reports (landscape strategy, ecology/BNG, coalescence/landscape assessment and DAS), rather than via additional technical documents.

Policy ST3: Spatial Strategy

We support the overall spatial strategy in ST3 which directs growth to sustainable settlements, including West Bergholt, and explicitly aims to balance housing needs with protection of landscape, biodiversity and settlement separation. The western parcel of PP44 sits immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary, within a sustainable village with good access to services, and is already framed by robust boundaries and existing development on three sides, such that it reads as a logical infill extension rather than outward sprawl.

A Coalescence Impact Assessment has already been prepared and can demonstrate that development of the western parcel in the draft allocation PP44 would not erode the perceived or physical gap to Braiswick and would maintain the distinct identity of West Bergholt, aligning the allocation with ST3's stated objectives. We therefore consider the allocation at PP44 to be a sound expression of the spatial strategy, provided that detailed policies do not layer on disproportionate procedural requirements that make timely delivery of the 100 dwellings more difficult than necessary.

Policy ST7: Infrastructure Delivery and Impact Mitigation

We support the principle that development must be supported by appropriate infrastructure and that allocations, including PP44, are to be considered viable at the point of plan adoption. However, as drafted ST7 is highly prescriptive about viability reviews, "full mitigation" and staged re-appraisals. For smaller allocated greenfield schemes such as the anticipated 25 units on the western parcel at PP44, repeated viability review mechanisms and a presumption of "full mitigation" in every case risk undermining deliverability and adding uncertainty for landowners and developers.

To be justified and effective, we recommend that ST7:

- Distinguishes more clearly between large, multi-phase strategic schemes and smaller allocated sites, with viability review clauses reserved for the former; and
- Recognises that where allocations are shown to be viable at plan adoption, additional blanket expectations for re-testing should be the exception, not the norm.

Without this proportionate approach, there is a risk that cumulative obligations (combined with detailed requirements in NZ, EN, GN and PP44) could threaten the timely delivery of housing on PP44, contrary to the plan's housing requirement and the tests of soundness.

Policy ST8: Place Shaping Principles

The western parcel for PP44 can demonstrate many of the place-shaping principles in ST8, including: context-responsive, low-rise built form; tree-lined streets; an emphasis on green infrastructure; walkable access to services; and the potential for a layout that reinforces West Bergholt's "woody" character at the settlement edge. We therefore support the broad aims of ST8 and welcome its focus on quality rather than purely numerical standards.

We do, however, seek reassurance that the requirement for "development frameworks, masterplans, design codes and other design guidance" will be applied proportionately and not routinely imposed on smaller allocated sites such as PP44 where a single, well-structured DAS and parameter plan is sufficient. Requiring bespoke codes and frameworks for modest edge-of-village allocations would be onerous, costly and could delay housing delivery without demonstrable additional benefit. Subject to explicit reference to proportionality in the supporting text, we consider ST8 capable of being found sound.

Policy EN2: Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Environmental Net Gain

Our concerns relate to the rigidity of directing off-site BNG to a short list of preferred sites and restricting ‘high’ strategic significance scores to either those sites or the LNRS strategic opportunities. In practice, for an allocation such as PP44, there may be opportunities to deliver high-value enhancement closer to West Bergholt (for example on associated land holdings or other local sites), which could be more meaningful to local biodiversity and community benefit than directing units to distant locations.

To be justified and effective, we request that EN2:

- Retains flexibility for applicants to propose alternative off-site locations where these can be shown, through proportionate ecological evidence, to deliver equal or greater strategic benefit; and
- Confirms that for smaller allocations where 10% BNG is achievable on-site, the Council will not require additional stand-alone “environmental net gain” strategies beyond what is already contained in the ecological assessment and landscape proposals.

This would support genuine outcomes on the ground, rather than adding more documentary requirements.

Policy EN5: New and Existing Trees

We support the principle of protecting existing trees and securing appropriate new planting. However, EN5 cannot be considered in isolation from the separate policy requiring an increase in tree canopy cover (GN4). As drafted, the two policies appear to impose overlapping and potentially cumulative requirements; EN5 seeks an increase in the number of trees and robust protection/mitigation for existing trees while GN4 requires a quantified increase in tree canopy cover.

Requiring both a numeric increase in trees and a separate percentage increase in canopy cover risks double-counting the same objective and could become unduly onerous, particularly on modest allocated sites such as the western parcel of PP44 where other constraints (coalescence, heritage, density) must also be balanced. If the Council is minded to retain a specific canopy requirement, then EN5 and GN4 should be integrated or rationalised, so that applicants are not faced with two separate tree/cover tests which may in practice conflict with each other.

We welcome the recognition in EN5 that the visual and environmental impacts of trees will be assessed “upon maturity” rather than at the point of planting. This is a realistic acknowledgement of how trees function in townscape and landscape terms, and avoids putting undue weight on the immediate, short-term appearance of new planting.

We also support the explicit recognition that the removal of trees can be acceptable where appropriate replacement planting is secured. This reflects the practical reality that some removals are necessary to facilitate development or address safety/condition issues, and that the planning system should focus on the overall, long-term tree resource.

To make EN5 justified and effective, we therefore request that:

1. The policy and supporting text are read and applied together with GN4, and ideally combined, so that applicants are subject to a single, coherent set of requirements on trees and canopy, rather than overlapping obligations; and
2. It is made clear that compliance will be judged on the overall arboricultural and canopy outcome, taking into account necessary removals, new planting and the canopy at maturity, rather than on separate numerical tests for both tree numbers and canopy percentage

Policy EN8: Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)

We support directing development away from areas at highest flood risk and agree that SuDS should be central to managing surface water. The draft allocation of PP44 site is not in a high flood risk zone and is well-suited to a SuDS-led approach integrated with public open space and biodiversity, as reflected in the emerging drainage strategy for the western parcel.

Our primary concern is the blanket requirement for groundwater monitoring between October–March wherever sites are deemed at risk of groundwater flooding, coupled with extensive references to multiple guidance documents. For a relatively small, edge-of-settlement greenfield allocation, there should be scope for proportionate assessment based on actual risk and site conditions, rather than a default expectation of 6-month monitoring in every case.

To be justified and effective, EN8 should:

- Make clear that winter groundwater monitoring will only be required where initial evidence indicates a realistic risk that groundwater will constrain SuDS; and
- Confirm that, for lower-risk allocated sites, an FRA and SuDS strategy proportionate to the scale and risk profile of the development will satisfy the policy.

Without such clarification, EN8 risks adding unnecessary cost and delay to allocated housing sites, contrary to the plan's housing delivery objectives.

Policy GN1: Open Space and Green Network and Waterways Principles

We support the principle that new development should provide connected open space and green infrastructure; the western parcel of PP44 should be able to provide on-site public open space and green links that support a wooded, filtered settlement edge.

However, GN1 introduces multiple layers of requirement, specific open space typologies, connection standards and references to the Green Network and Waterways Guiding Principles, which risk being applied in a rigid, one-size-fits-all manner. For modest allocated schemes, open space should be calibrated to the site's character, coalescence and heritage considerations; for PP44 in particular, coalescence and settlement edge character are key drivers of the disposition of open space.

To be effective, GN1 should confirm that:

- Open space standards and typologies will be applied flexibly so as not to conflict with local, landscaping, ecology, coalescence or heritage objectives; and
- Applicants may demonstrate compliance within their DAS and landscape strategy rather than via a separate “Green Network” report.

Policy GN4: Tree Canopy Cover

We support the broad ambition to increase tree cover across the authority area. However, as drafted GN4 is over-prescriptive, internally inconsistent with other policies, and not realistically achievable on all sites. GN4 requires:

- A Tree Canopy Cover Assessment for all major applications;
- Development to “seek, where appropriate, to increase the level of canopy cover on site by a minimum of 10%”; and
- For sites with less than 10% baseline canopy, a mandatory minimum 10% canopy coverage across the site. It also states that “new streets should be tree lined” and that new and existing trees must be incorporated into new developments.

There are several problems with this approach:

1. “Where appropriate” is undefined and unmeasurable; The policy uses the phrase “where appropriate” in relation to increasing canopy cover by at least 10%, but provides no objective guidance on:
 - What constitutes “appropriate” in different contexts (e.g. high-density urban, village infill, constrained sites);
 - How this interacts with other constraints such as heritage setting, coalescence, highways safety, visibility splays, utilities easements and SuDS layouts; or
 - How decision-makers will judge when it is, or is not, appropriate to apply the full 10% uplift.

2. Not always achievable on real-world sites: A blanket requirement to secure at least 10% canopy cover (where baseline is below 10%) will not always be achievable once:
 - Access, visibility splays and highway geometry are factored in;
 - Separation distances and garden standards are applied;
 - Coalescence/landscape and heritage settings are properly respected; and
 - Viable densities are reached to deliver housing numbers and policy-compliant affordable housing.

On a modest allocated site like the western parcel of PP44, which already has to accommodate low-rise built form, generous boundary planting to preserve separation, SuDS, parking and a viable housing quantum, there is limited flexibility left to chase a rigid canopy percentage.

3. Tree-lined streets are not always appropriate: GN4 states that “new streets should be tree lined” in all cases. This fails to recognise that tree-lined streets are:
 - Not always compatible with highway safety (visibility, forward sight lines, junction radii);

- Sometimes in conflict with services corridors, SuDS arrangements and adoptable highway requirements;
- Potentially problematic close to buildings (shading, subsidence risk on shrinkable soils, root conflicts, future pressure for pruning/felling); and
- Not always appropriate in terms of local character which have pockets of estates surrounded by trees rather than tree-lined, or where densities and plot sizes are tighter.

The NPPF itself only expects tree-lined streets “where appropriate”, explicitly recognising that they are not a universal solution; GN4’s wording does not mirror this caveat.

4. Duplication and overlap with EN5 and other policies: EN5 already requires major development to consider opportunities for new tree planting (including street trees) and to weigh trees against highways and built-form constraints, with replacement planting where loss is unavoidable. GN1 and LC1 also address landscape and green infrastructure structure. Layering GN4 on top of EN5 produces overlapping obligations:

- An increase in tree numbers and a minimum canopy percentage;
- A general expectation for new trees and a separate requirement for tree-lined streets; and
- Multiple assessment and management plan requirements.

This is exactly the kind of cumulative, paperwork-heavy policy environment that is likely to add cost and delay to decision-making without clear additional benefit, particularly on allocated sites that are already landscape-led.

5. Compensatory provision mechanism is open-ended: GN4 states that where requirements are “not possible or desirable”, compensatory provision should be

secured through a legal obligation, potentially including additional or larger open space or off-site planting, to be agreed case-by-case. This is:

- Vague as to when compensatory provision is triggered;
- Open-ended as to quantum and location; and
- Potentially onerous for smaller sites, effectively turning a non-achievable on-site standard into an off-site financial or land obligation.

Without clear thresholds, there is a risk that GN4 becomes a de facto tariff applied inconsistently across applications.

GN4 risks being unrealistic, burdensome and counter-productive, particularly for smaller allocations where space, character, coalescence, heritage and viability constraints mean that a blanket 10% canopy and tree-lined street requirement simply cannot sensibly be met.

Policy LC1: Landscape

LC1, as drafted, is unduly onerous, poorly targeted and heavily reliant on subjective terminology, and therefore fails the tests of justification and effectiveness. The opening requirement is that: “A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is required for all major applications and must be prepared in accordance with Landscape Institute guidelines.”

Requiring a full LVIA for all major applications, regardless of location, scale or sensitivity, is plainly not proportionate. Major applications include a wide range of proposals (e.g. modest edge-of-settlement housing sites, infill schemes, changes of use, urban redevelopment) where a full LVIA-compliant LVIA adds little beyond what can be addressed in a proportionate landscape/townscape and visual appraisal, DAS and planning statement.

The NPPF and PPG are explicit that information requirements should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development and its likely impacts, not automatically escalated because a proposal crosses an arbitrary “major” threshold.

For the western parcel at Colchester Road, the key planning question is not a strategic landscape capacity question but a targeted coalescence question – i.e. whether the site’s development would erode the separation between West Bergholt and Braiswick. That would be better addressed through a stand-alone Coalescence Impact Assessment, anchored directly to the Neighbourhood Plan and supported by the Planning Statement and DAS.

Imposing a mandatory LVIA prepared strictly to Landscape Institute guidelines for every major application represents an unnecessary duplication of effort and cost, particularly where site-specific evidence (such as a Coalescence Assessment) can address the relevant landscape/visual questions. This approach risks becoming a tick-box exercise that does not meaningfully improve decision-taking and has not been shown in the Reg 18 evidence to be necessary or viability-neutral for small and medium-sized allocations.

There is no clear evidence that all major proposals across the authority are of such landscape sensitivity that a full LVIA is always warranted.

LC1 then requires development to: “safeguard or strengthen tranquillity, features and patterns that contribute to the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area, protect rural openness and sense of place...”

Concepts such as “tranquillity”, “sense of place”, “local distinctiveness” and “enhancement of the character of the landscape” are:

- Highly subjective and dependent on individual value judgements;
- Not defined in the policy or its supporting text; and

- Not clearly underpinned by an evidence base that maps where “tranquil areas” exist, how they are measured, or how they are expected to change over time.

This undermines predictability and effectiveness: applicants cannot know upfront what is required to “safeguard tranquillity” or when a perceived loss of tranquillity will be used as a refusal reason.

LC1 introduces a universal LVIA requirement and a suite of subjective tests that are liable to inconsistent application, increased costs and delays, and could frustrate the delivery of allocated sites such as the western parcel of PP44, despite the clear evidence that such sites can be accommodated in a landscape-led way.

Policy NZ1: Net Zero Carbon Development

We support the objective of reducing operational energy demand and support an energy-efficient fabric-first approach; Energy and Sustainability Statements should be able to ensure that this is delivered on schemes.

However, NZ1 introduces detailed quantitative energy performance standards and on-site renewable requirements over and above Building Regulations. It is not clear from the Reg 18 material that the cumulative cost of meeting these standards has been fully tested for small and medium allocated sites such as PP44, especially when combined with affordable housing, BNG, drainage, coalescence, heritage and infrastructure requirements.

To be justified and effective, NZ1 should:

- Explicitly rely on proportionate viability evidence demonstrating that small edge-of-village allocations can absorb the additional cost without threatening deliverability; and

- Allow some flexibility in how net-zero trajectories are met (e.g. fabric-first plus a mix of on-site and, where appropriate, near-site solutions), rather than prescribing a single technical route.

Otherwise there is a real risk that NZ1, in combination with other obligations, undermines the deliverability of PP44 and similar allocations, contrary to the requirement that the plan be effective and positively prepared.

Policy NZ2: Net Zero Carbon Development – Embodied Carbon

We agree that consideration of embodied carbon is good practice and support encouraging low-carbon materials and construction methods. Nevertheless, the expectation of detailed whole-life embodied carbon assessments and potential offsetting mechanisms may be disproportionate and could add consultancy cost without clear decision-making benefit.

To be justified and effective, NZ2 should:

- Make clear that for sites under 50 units, embodied carbon can be addressed through qualitative design statements and specification choices, rather than mandating full quantified whole-life carbon assessments in all cases; and
- Prioritise outcomes (material selection, reuse, efficient construction) over extensive reporting.

This would avoid NZ2 becoming another “tick-box” requirement which risks delaying delivery of homes on PP44 without materially improving carbon performance.

Policy NZ3: Wastewater and Water Supply

We support the principle of ensuring adequate water and wastewater capacity for new development and agree that Anglian Water should be engaged at an early stage.

However, NZ3 and PP44 together contain a long list of measures (confirmation of capacity, phasing triggers, separate demonstration of wastewater capacity, and additional measures such as removal of unrequired flows and targeted education campaigns). This is not proportionate or realistic for the developer to lead on strategic network interventions and resident education programmes; such initiatives are more appropriately led by the statutory undertaker.

To be justified and effective, NZ3 and the associated PP44 criteria should:

- Clarify that early confirmation of capacity and any necessary local network improvements are sufficient for developments that are not strategic allocations; and
- Reserve wider strategic measures (such as removal of historic flows) for plan-level or utility-led projects, not as a condition precedent to individual planning permissions.

Without this clarification, there is a risk that the detail of NZ3/PP44 becomes a barrier to the timely delivery of the 100-home allocation.

Policy H1: Housing Mix

We support the aim of providing a mix of housing types to meet identified needs and note that the western parcel of PP44 can provide a range of dwelling types and sizes, including smaller units and accessible homes, subject to detailed design at reserved matters stage.

To be effective, however, H1 must operate with sufficient flexibility so that the specified mix is applied at the settlement or borough level, rather than rigidly to every small or medium-sized scheme. We welcome that the policy does include the possibility of alternative mixes, but it remains unclear what type of evidence would be suitable for the Council to be satisfied at a departure from the mix.

Policy H2: Affordable Housing

We support the principle of securing affordable housing and note that at least 30% affordable housing is envisaged as achievable for PP44, subject to detailed tenure and mix discussions at reserved matters/S106 stage.

However, H2 should acknowledge the cumulative impact of other policy requirements (NZ1–3, EN2, EN8, GN1, GN4, PP44 infrastructure criteria) on viability, particularly for smaller edge-of-village allocations. The blanket expectation that allocations are viable for full policy-compliant affordable housing and all other obligations may not hold in every case, especially later in the plan period or in changing market conditions.

To be justified and effective, H2 should:

- Retain flexibility for site-specific viability evidence to inform the precise quantum and tenure mix on allocations; and
- Confirm that the Council will balance affordable housing expectations against the need to ensure that allocated housing sites are actually delivered.

This is important to ensure that PP44 can deliver 100 homes, including affordable provision, rather than risk stalling because of cumulative cost burdens.

Policy PC2: Active and Sustainable Travel

We support PC2's aim of encouraging active and sustainable travel and note that the western parcel of PP44 is exceptionally well-located for this: it benefits from lit footways along Colchester Road, direct pedestrian links into the village, and a bus stop directly opposite providing regular services.

Our request is that travel-related documentation and mitigation are proportionate to the scale of the scheme. For a 25-unit phase, a concise Transport Statement and simple Residential Travel Plan are likely to be sufficient; more complex modelling or extensive travel planning requirements would not be justified.

To be effective and justified, PC2's supporting text should confirm that the scale of transport assessment and travel planning will be calibrated to the size and impact of development, especially on allocated sites where sustainable transport credentials are already clearly established.

Policy PC4: Development Density

We support the principle of making efficient use of land but have concerns that PC4 could be interpreted as requiring densities at the upper end of the suggested ranges in locations such as West Bergholt, regardless of local character and coalescence context. For PP44, the western parcel of PP44 is currently envisioned as being a deliberately low-rise and landscape-led, reflecting settlement edge sensitivities, heritage setting and coalescence considerations; this inevitably limits the achievable density while still delivering an efficient pattern of development.

To be justified and effective, PC4 should:

- Make explicit that density expectations are indicative at a settlement-wide level and will be moderated by site-specific constraints and design/heritage/coalescence objectives; and

- Confirm that for allocated sites such as PP44, achieving the allocation's dwelling range in a form that respects local character is more important than meeting a rigid numerical density target.

This will ensure that density policy supports, rather than conflicts with, the delivery of well-designed homes on sensitive edges.

Policy PC6: Design and Amenity

We agree that good design and amenity are essential considerations in decision-making. However, as drafted, PC6 is overly subjective, repetitive of existing national and local policy, and insufficiently clear to be applied consistently.

The opening paragraph requires all development to be designed to a “high standard”, to “positively respond to its context”, to “reflect the local distinctiveness of Colchester”, to “contribute to placemaking” and to support a “low-carbon, inclusive and climate resilient future”. Great weight will be given to “outstanding or innovative designs” and “poor design will be refused”.

Most of the subsequent bullets then require development to:

- “Promote visually attractive, functional, coherent and distinctive environments”;
- Provide “attractive, well connected and legible streets and public spaces”;
- Create a “safe, resilient and secure environment” that supports “pride of place”; and
- Deliver “functional, robust and adaptable designs” that contribute to “the long-term quality of the area”.

These phrases are highly value-laden and inherently subjective. The policy does not explain:

- How “attractive”, “distinctive”, “coherent” or “high standard” will be assessed in practice;
- What objective benchmarks, beyond existing Building Regulations, NDSS and adopted design guidance, the Council intends to use; or
- How decision-makers, applicants and Inspectors will distinguish between schemes that are merely “good” and those that qualify as “outstanding or innovative” for the purpose of “great weight”.

Without clear criteria or cross-reference to a defined design code or SPD, there is a real risk that PC6 will simply re-state broad design aspirations already contained in the NPPF (e.g. section 12) and in adopted Section 2 policies, but in looser language, creating scope for inconsistent and potentially arbitrary application. This undermines the effectiveness of the policy and makes it difficult to see how the Council could robustly substantiate a refusal solely on the basis that a proposal is not “visually attractive” or “distinctive enough”, particularly on allocated sites where the principle and broad parameters are already established.

In addition, PC6 seeks to operate at multiple levels simultaneously:

- As a strategic design vision (placemaking, low-carbon, pride of place);
- As a detailed development management policy (privacy, daylight, NDSS, security); and
- As a process policy (promoting design codes, masterplans, design briefs).

This creates substantial overlap with other policies (ST8, LC1, GN1, EN2, EN8, PC7, PC8) and risks turning PC6 into a catch-all “beauty” test that can be deployed to either support or resist almost any proposal, without clear evidential thresholds.

Policy PC7: Residential Schemes on Greenfield Sites

We recognise that PC7 is particularly relevant to PP44 and support the focus on landscape-led design, green infrastructure, and integration with existing settlement patterns. However we do not welcome this policy as it risks layering further generic requirements (for example, additional assessments or statements) over those already present in LC1, GN1, EN2, EN8 and PP44. For allocated greenfield sites, many of these considerations are already baked into the allocation and supporting evidence (including the Stage 1 HIA for PP44).

To be justified and effective, PC7 should:

- Make explicit that for allocated greenfield sites, the policy expectations are already captured in the allocation policy and that further bespoke assessments will only be sought where specific local issues warrant them; and
- Avoid creating a perception that every greenfield proposal must provide a new set of freestanding reports in addition to the baseline package.

This would ensure that PC7 adds clarity rather than duplication, and supports the timely delivery of housing on PP44.

Policy PC8: Private Amenity Space

We recognise the importance of providing appropriate private amenity space for new homes. However, we have significant concerns about the absolutist and subjective wording of key parts of Policy PC8, particularly: “Private amenity space must be designed to a high standard to optimise its use and meet the recreational needs and promote health and wellbeing of residents”; and “All private amenity spaces must be designed to avoid significant overlooking.”

Taken literally, these clauses are neither justified nor effective. The requirement to “optimise” the use of every private amenity space, and to “meet the recreational needs

and promote health and wellbeing of residents”, is vague and subjective. There is no clear, evidence-based benchmark against which officers, applicants or Inspectors could reasonably judge whether an individual garden, balcony or terrace has “optimised” its use or sufficiently “promotes health and wellbeing”.

Health and wellbeing outcomes arise from the overall living environment (including access to public open space, walkable streets, daylight, noise environment, etc.), not solely from private garden design. These wider issues are already addressed through other policies (e.g. ST1, ST8, GN1, EN2). PC8 therefore risks duplication and adds an ambiguous additional test that could be applied inconsistently.

The wording implies that every private amenity space, in all contexts, must provide for an unspecified level of “recreational” use. In many sustainable locations and higher-density formats, some homes will appropriately have smaller private spaces supplemented by shared amenity, play areas and public open space.

PC8, as drafted, could be used to resist otherwise well-designed, policy-compliant schemes which make efficient use of land in accordance with Policy PC4, simply because individual gardens or balconies are not considered to have “optimised” their recreational function.

This risks undermining the effectiveness of the plan in delivering housing on allocated sites, including PP44, where a balance must be struck between private gardens, landscape, coalescence, heritage setting and overall density.

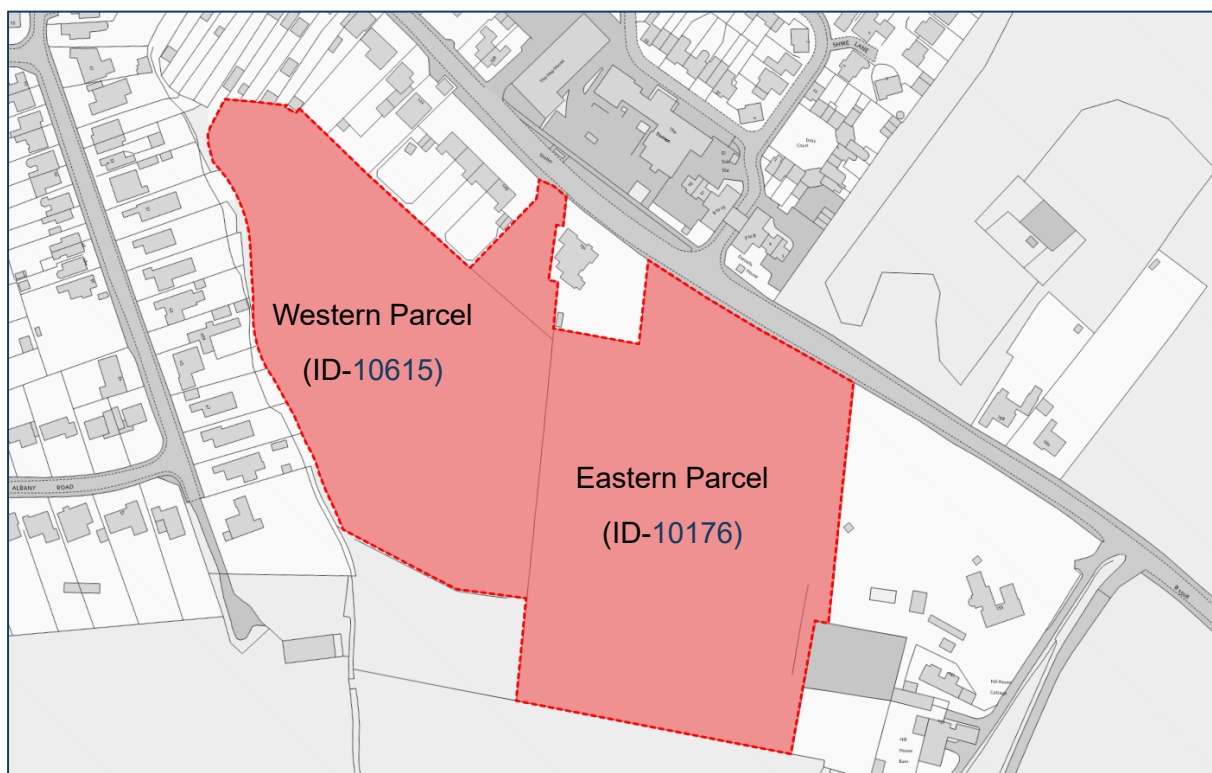
The requirement that “all private amenity spaces must be designed to avoid significant overlooking” is an unrealistic and absolute standard. In almost all residential environments, particularly compact, walkable layouts, some degree of mutual overlooking is inherent and desirable, contributing to natural surveillance and safer streets. The usual planning test is whether there would be unacceptable harm to

privacy or an unreasonable degree of overlooking, having regard to context and separation distances, not the complete “avoidance” of any significant overlooking for every private space.

As drafted, this clause could be read as requiring rigid separation distances and layouts that conflict with other policy objectives (e.g. active frontages, perimeter blocks, efficient land use), thereby making the policy ineffective and internally inconsistent with the wider design strategy.

Policy PP44: Land off Colchester Road, West Bergholt

We support in principle the allocation of PP44 new dwellings at West Bergholt, recognising that the settlement is identified as a Sustainable Settlement capable of accommodating appropriate growth. However, we have significant concerns about the detailed wording of PP44, particularly in terms of flexibility, proportionality and clarity, and how it will operate in practice for the two parcels of the allocation. Below is an extract from the draft policy map with the separate parcels.



Deliverability and Sustainability of the Western Parcel

The western parcel is ready to come forward now for residential development and begin addressing the need for new dwellings in West Bergholt. The site is located on the south-east side of West Bergholt with direct access onto Colchester Road. West Bergholt is classified as a sustainable settlement in Colchester's Local Plan and the site sits directly adjacent to the settlement boundary.

The map the below highlights some of the key services and facilities available via paved footpaths, many of which are lit;

Light pink = within 10 minute walk,

Orange = within 15 minute walk, and

Yellow = within 20 minute walk.



Parcel independence and non-prejudice

The western parcel is a self-contained, broadly triangular site fronting Colchester Road, enclosed by existing village development and mature boundary vegetation, identified as Site with ID-10615. The extract of a feasibility plan, below, demonstrates

that it is capable of delivering around 25 bungalows and 2-storey chalet-style homes in a manner that respects local character, preserves settlement separation and accords with the West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan's coalescence policy, as evidenced in a prepared Coalescence Impact Assessment submitted alongside these comments.



Crucially, the western parcel has an existing, suitable access onto Colchester Road between Nos. 129 and 131, with achievable visibility splays and lit footways linking to the village centre and to Braiswick/Colchester. A bus stop is located directly opposite,

with regular services. In views along Colchester Road, this established access already reads as part of the village street scene. As the Coalescence Impact Assessment finds, developing the western parcel would therefore be experienced as a natural deepening of the existing built form, not a new projection into open countryside.

By contrast, the eastern land within PP44 would extend beyond the current eastern limit of the village's built envelope and has a greater potential to push development out into the open land between West Bergholt and Braiswick, particularly given its location in the Colne River Valley Slopes character area.

There is no technical or policy reason why the western parcel should be functionally or temporally tied to this more sensitive eastern land. It is a standalone, deliverable parcel and PP44 must therefore be worded so that each land parcel within the allocation can come forward independently, on its own merits, provided it satisfies the overarching parameters of not contributing to the coalescence, which is likely to be difficult for the eastern side to demonstrate. The western parcel should not be prejudiced, delayed or constrained by the more complex landscape and coalescence issues arising on the eastern parcel.

Landscape contexts

PP44, as drafted, treats the allocation as a single, homogenous block of land. In reality, the western and eastern parcels fall into different landscape character areas with very different sensitivities and roles.

The western parcel lies within the *Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau (LCA B6)*. This is a gently undulating plateau landscape forming a watershed between the Stour and Colne, with predominantly arable fields, low hedgerows, scattered tree belts and a pattern of settlement concentrated on the higher plateau – including the expanding settlement of West Bergholt. The character area is confirmed as being influence by modern development of the village.

Importantly, landscape management guidance for this character area is not applicable to this site, reflecting that the parcel is effectively read as part of the existing village fabric rather than open plateau farmland.

The eastern parcel, by contrast, lies within the more sensitive *Colne River Valley Slopes (LCA A5)*. This area is characterised by valley slopes, a strong pre-18th century field pattern, scattered woodlands and farmsteads along the slopes, and open cross-valley views. The Development Management guidance for this character area explicitly states that:

- “Any large scale or visually intrusive development would be detrimental to the semi-enclosed rural character of the landscape”; and
- The Council should “resist development that would erode the rural character of the valley.”

PP44 does not acknowledge these fundamentally different landscape contexts. A single set of bullets and a single “approximate” capacity is applied across both parcels, even though:

- The western parcel already sits within the perceived envelope of West Bergholt and makes a limited contribution to the wider LCA B6 landscape; whereas
- The eastern parcel is more closely related to the A5 valley slopes and to the rural land that helps maintain separation from Braiswick/Colchester.

Any policy framework for PP44 that fails to distinguish between these parcels risks being unjustified and ineffective, because it ignores the evidence base’s own recognition of differing sensitivities.

Separate delivery, early housing and settlement pattern

Requiring the two parcels within PP44 to come forward as a single, comprehensive scheme would be unnecessary and counter-productive. The western and eastern parcels are in separate ownership/promotional control and are at very different stages of readiness. Insisting on a joint planning application or tightly bound phasing strategy would risk delaying the delivery of new homes on land that is demonstrably available and suitable now, the western parcel, simply because the eastern land is more complex and less advanced. There is no need for such an approach. The western parcel can:

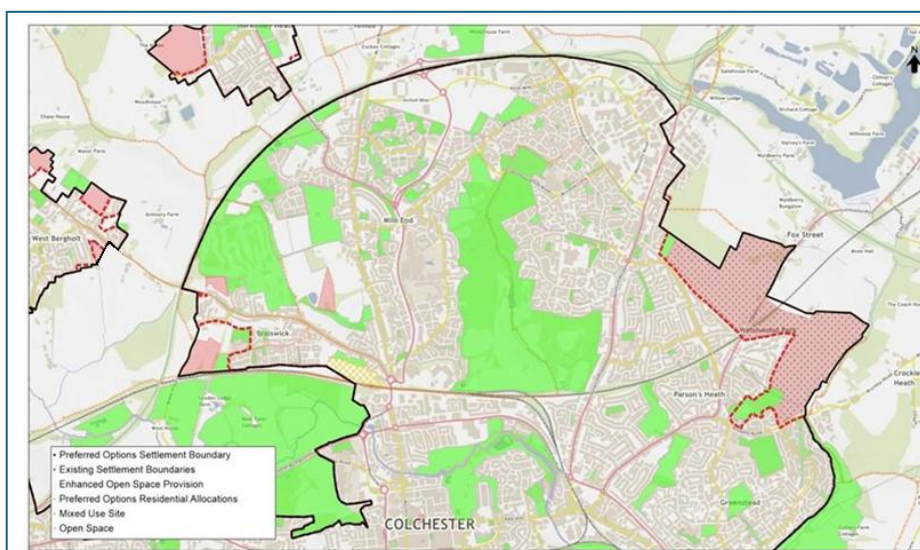
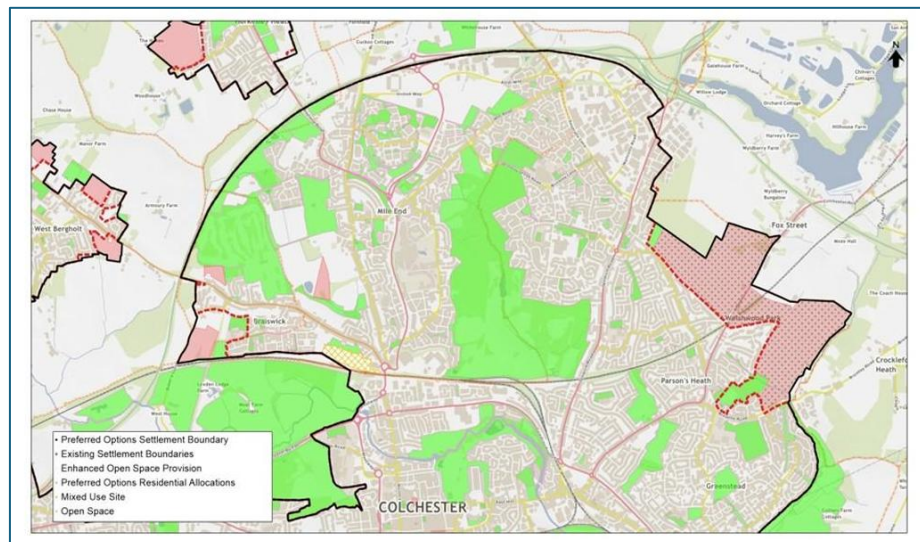
- Deliver around 25 dwellings as an immediately developable, self-contained scheme;
- Provide on-site open space, BNG, landscape mitigation and SuDS; and
- Make appropriate financial contributions towards local infrastructure through the normal Section 106 process, in exactly the same way as any other standalone allocation.

The eastern parcel, if and when it comes forward, would be capable of making its own proportionate S106 contributions and mitigation, having regard to its separate landscape and coalescence context. There is no planning reason why contributions and mitigation cannot be secured on a parcel-by-parcel basis, provided the overall package remains policy-compliant.

Moreover, bringing the two parcels forward separately is consistent with the established settlement pattern of West Bergholt as described in the Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents. The village is characterised by distinct pockets of development contained by tree belts and hedgerows, rather than a single, undifferentiated urban edge. Allowing the western and eastern parcels to come forward as two distinct but related clusters, each contained and filtered by existing and enhanced vegetation, would reflect this pattern far more closely than a single, amalgamated scheme.

In this context, it would be entirely appropriate, and beneficial, for any future scheme on the eastern parcel to provide a pedestrian-only connection to the western parcel via a sensitively designed footpath through the tree line that currently separates the two sites. This would:

- Maintain a sense of two separate but connected communities, in keeping with the village's "pocketed" form;
- Promote permeability and walkability without forcing unnecessary vehicular integration; and
- Retain the important structural role of trees and hedgerows as the dominant visual and physical separators.



To demonstrate how the two parcels are different and that potentially the eastern side could delay the western side coming forward, the two parcels have been re-assessed against the questions in the SLAA and put into a table form below;

Question in SLAA	West parcel	Eastern parcel
Is the site within or adjacent to the existing settlement boundary?	Green – Surrounded by settlement boundary	Amber – adjacent to or within close proximity an existing settlement boundary
Would development of the site lead to coalescence between settlements?	Green – no contribution to coalescence	Red – significant risk to coalescence
What is the main access point/s to the site? Is the access safe and suitable? Are there any highway constraints?	Green – Existing access on site capable of being enhanced with new 2m wide footpath	Amber – some constraints identified but not significant enough to affect the site's deliverability
Is there any evidence that it would not be possible to deliver the necessary utilities?	Green – no known issues with utility provision	Green – no known issues with utility provision
Are there any issues that would prevent/limit the developable area of the site?	Green – no known site specific issues or evidence has been provided which demonstrates that site constraints can be adequately addressed	Amber – some site specific issues which could be addressed
Is the site brownfield or greenfield?	Red – greenfield (approx. 75% plus)	Red – greenfield (approx. 75% plus)
What is the agricultural land classification?	Red – Grades 1, 2 and/or 3a (50% or more)	Red – Grades 1, 2 and/or 3a (50% or more)
Impact of neighbouring uses	Green – there are no neighbouring use issues	Green – there are no neighbouring use issues
Is the site partially located within any of the following designations? Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ancient Woodlands, RAMSAR	Green – site is not located within any designations listed.	Green – site is not located within any designations listed.

Is the site located within any of the following local designations? Local Wildlife Site (LoWS), Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Coastal Protection Belt	Green – site is not located within any designations listed.	Green – site is not located within any designations listed.
Could development of the site enhance or create green infrastructure e.g Open Space, Park, Sport and/or recreation grounds, Country Park, Allotments?	Green – yes, there are opportunities to enhance or create green infrastructure.	Green – yes, there are opportunities to enhance or create green infrastructure.
Would development of the site be likely to cause harm to any archaeological or heritage assets or their setting? Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 2* Listed Building, Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas, Locally Listed Heritage Asset, archaeological assets	Green – no potential harm.	Amber – there is a possibility of harm arising from new development.
Would development of the site result in the loss of, or partial loss of, public open space, a Public Right of Way (PRoW), or a bridleway?	Green – development would not result in the loss of public open space, public right of way or a bridleway.	Green – development would not result in the loss of public open space, public right of way or a bridleway.
What flood zone is the site located in?	Green – Site is wholly located in Flood Zone 1	Green – Site is wholly located in Flood Zone 1
Is the site within a Critical Drainage Area?	Green – site is not located within a Critical Drainage Area	Green – site is not located within a Critical Drainage Area
Has the site been submitted for development through the Call for Sites for the Local Plan Review?	Green – Yes, the site has been submitted through the Call for Sites for the Local Plan Review by a site owner or developer.	Green – Yes, the site has been submitted through the Call for Sites for the Local Plan Review by a site owner or developer.
What is the site ownership situation?	Green – Single ownership	Amber – unknown.
Is the land owner open to working in partnership and bringing the site forward in combination with others to enable a comprehensive approach to development?	Green – Single ownership.	Amber – unknown.
Is the site currently in use and is it likely to continue to be used for the foreseeable future /	Green – site is vacant or its current use can cease at short notice.	Green – site is vacant or its current use can cease at short notice.

would that use prevent development on the site from coming forward?		
Does the site have a history of unimplemented permissions?	Green – No unimplemented permissions	Green – No unimplemented permissions
Is development of the site in line with existing policies requiring a contribution, i.e., affordable housing, is development of the site economically viable? Are there any factors which could limit its viability.	Green – development is likely viable.	Green – development is likely viable.
Does the development of, or access to, the site rely on another piece of land, and has that land been put forward for development?	Green – the site does not rely on another piece of land.	Amber – will rely on the western parcel.
Is the site within a Minerals Safeguarding Area and/or Minerals and Waste Consultation Area?	Amber – Site is within a Minerals Consultation Area and/or a Waste Consultation Area.	Amber – Site is within a Minerals Consultation Area and/or a Waste Consultation Area.
Is the land currently protected for an alternative use within the Colchester Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan?	Green – the site is not protected for any alternative use.	Amber – the site is protected for an alternative use but there is evidence to suggest that the site could or should be released for an alternative use
Is the site contaminated or partially contaminated?	Green – contamination study shows no contamination expected to be found on site.	Amber – there is possibility of contamination, but it can be remediated without affecting development viability.

The brewery gateway and settlement form

The listed converted Brewery on Colchester Road acts as a key building marking the entrance to West Bergholt, as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. In townscape terms it functions as a clear gateway landmark; passing the brewery, one reads oneself as entering the village.

Currently, the scattering of dwellings along Colchester Road *beyond* the brewery, towards Braiswick, which fall outside the settlement boundary, are perceived as part of the countryside fringe, not as part of the village.

The existing access serving the western parcel, between Nos. 129 and 131, sits on the *village side* of this gateway and has been recognised in appeal decisions as reading as part of the established village street scene.

Development on the western parcel, served from this existing access, would therefore be perceived as a deepening of the existing village form behind the gateway, not as an extension of the built edge towards Braiswick. It remains visually contained by existing development and mature boundary vegetation and does not project the settlement toward the valley or across the coalescence gap.

By contrast, the eastern land comes *forward* of the brewery and would visually link the village to the currently “countryside” dwellings along Colchester Road to the east. There is a real risk that those outlying dwellings would start to be read as part of the continuous settlement; and the perceived gap between West Bergholt and Braiswick would be narrowed, thereby increasing coalescence.

PP44 does not acknowledge this distinction. It must be explicit that:

- The gateway role of the Brewery and the current settlement limit at that point should be enhanced; and
- Any built form *forward of the brewery* has significantly greater coalescence and landscape implications than development behind it on the western parcel.

Coalescence and Landscaping

The coalescence bullet in PP44 is particularly problematic. The draft requires development to:

“ensure it does not harm the coalescence break... and ensure appropriate mitigation and enhancement is provided as evidence through appropriate landscape character evidence to be agreed with the Council”.

This is unclear, duplicative and unjustified because the West Bergholt already has a specific coalescence policy (PP12) and a mapped Coalescence Zone in the Neighbourhood Plan; and the Coalescence Impact Assessment is the appropriate, targeted tool to assess whether development would erode physical or perceived separation, not a vague requirement for “landscape character evidence to be agreed with the Council”.

The prepared Coalescence Impact Assessment shows that the western parcel, although within the mapped zone, is visually contained, does not project the settlement edge toward Braiswick, is not visible from the Parish-identified “distinctive gateway” or “distinctive approach”, and reads as part of the village rather than the open gap. It concludes that development of this parcel would not increase coalescence, individually or cumulatively.

Requiring unspecified “landscape character evidence” over and above such a focused assessment is not justified by the evidence base and risks becoming an open-ended hurdle to the delivery of homes on an allocated site – particularly given that the eastern parcel, not the western, is the part of the allocation with the greater potential to erode the perceived gap.

BNG and screening: over-prescription

The biodiversity and screening bullets are also overly prescriptive. While we recognise that hedgerows, mature trees and the “woody” settlement edge are fundamental to West Bergholt’s character, the policy’s direction that on-site BNG:

- “should focus on enhancing hedgerows and enhancing the condition and distinctiveness of grassland”; and
- that screening “will be required” along all site boundaries,

reads as an attempt to pre-determine the ecological strategy and detailed landscaping at plan stage. BNG design should be ecologist-led and site-specific, guided by the statutory BNG regime and Policy EN2, not restricted to a short list of habitat types and a blanket screening requirement in one allocation policy. On the western parcel, a more nuanced approach may be required to balance BNG, views, character and surveillance.

Water and wastewater

We are particularly concerned by the water and wastewater bullets, which go beyond demonstrating capacity into prescriptive operational territory. PP44 requires, amongst other things:

- Confirmation of treatment capacity and phasing triggers;
- Demonstration of adequate wastewater capacity and proposed phasing requirements/alternative solutions; and
- A “range of measures” including removal of unrequired network flows, targeted education for new residents, and reduction in demand for potable water.

For the western parcel, Anglian Water has already confirmed that the existing network and WRC can accommodate the around a 25-unit scheme. In that context:

- Requiring development-specific “targeted education campaigns” and network-wide flow removal is disproportionate and strays into the operational remit of the statutory undertaker; and
- The necessary planning test is that applicants demonstrate, through liaison with Anglian Water and appropriate drainage/FRA work, that capacity exists or that any local network improvements needed to serve the development can be secured.

The current drafting risks making the allocation ineffective by introducing open-ended and poorly defined obligations that could be used to delay or frustrate otherwise acceptable proposals, even where utility providers are content. It is neither justified (no clear evidence of need at the scale of the western parcel) nor consistent with national policy on proportionality of information requirements.

Capacity and deliverability

Finally, we question whether the indicative capacity of “approximately 100 dwellings” across PP44 is realistic once all of the other policy requirements are factored in.

The client’s western parcel comprises around half of the allocation land but is realistically capable of delivering, as per the feasibility plan, c.25 dwellings if it is to provide:

- On-site open space of meaningful quality;
- On-site BNG in accordance with EN2;
- Landscape and structural planting sufficient to address coalescence and settlement edge character; and
- Space for SuDS and necessary drainage infrastructure.

On that basis, it is doubtful whether the combined allocation can genuinely accommodate 100 dwellings and the required open space, BNG, landscape mitigation and drainage across both parcels, especially given the higher landscape and coalescence sensitivities of the eastern land (LCA A5). If the eastern parcel must, as the LCA guidance suggests, avoid large-scale or visually intrusive development and avoid erosion of the valley’s rural character, then its developable capacity may be substantially constrained.

The plan has not clearly demonstrated how the 100-unit figure has been derived in the light of these constraints. There is therefore a risk that the headline capacity is over-optimistic, which in turn could undermine the robustness of the housing trajectory. At the very least, it should be made clear that 100 units is an upper, indicative figure, subject to detailed design and environmental constraints, and should not be used to resist smaller, well-designed schemes on either parcel.

Requested modifications to PP44

To make PP44 positively prepared, justified and effective, we request that the Council:

1. Clarify parcel independence and non-prejudice
 - Amend PP44 to confirm that different land parcels within the allocation may come forward independently, with their own vehicular access arrangements, provided they accord with the allocation parameters and relevant policies.
 - Avoid any wording that implies a single comprehensive application or inter-dependency between the western and eastern land, and make clear that the western parcel will not be prejudiced by the form or timing of development on the eastern parcel.
 - Secure S106 contributions separately, in line with their respective impacts; and
 - Maintain a landscape-led relationship between them, potentially including a future shared footpath, rather than being forced into a single, comprehensive scheme that would be harder to deliver and less reflective of local character.
2. Acknowledge differing landscape character areas
 - Explicitly recognise that the western parcel lies within *Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau (LCA B6)* and already reads as part of the expanded settlement, whereas the eastern parcel lies within the more sensitive *Colne River Valley Slopes (LCA A5)*.

- Recognise that the Neighbourhood Plan and Village Design Statement of West Bergholt, prepared by the Parish Council, states that the Valley Slopes character area is highly sensitive.
3. Protect the brewery gateway and settlement limit
- Acknowledge the converted Brewery as a key gateway building marking the entrance to West Bergholt.
 - Make clear that any new access and built form should come within the existing perceived settlement limit (i.e. using the western parcel access) rather than projecting forward of the brewery in a way that risks visually merging the village with countryside dwellings and increasing coalescence with Braiswick.
4. Replace the vague “landscape character evidence” requirement
- Delete or redraft the phrase “ensure appropriate mitigation and enhancement is provided as evidence through appropriate landscape character evidence to be agreed with the Council”.
 - Replace with a reference to proportionate Coalescence Impact Assessment (or equivalent) in the West Bergholt Coalescence Zone, explicitly recognising that the western parcel can meet PP12 where it preserves separation as demonstrated by the existing assessment.
5. Loosen the BNG prescription
- Amend the BNG bullet to allow the precise mix of habitats and measures to be ecologist-led, rather than constraining BNG to hedgerows and grassland only, while still acknowledging the importance of hedgerows and trees to the village’s character.
6. Rationalise water and wastewater obligations
- Limit the requirements on applicants to demonstrating, through liaison with Anglian Water, that there is sufficient capacity at the point of connection or that identified local improvements can be delivered.
 - Remove or recast the references to “removal of unrequired flows” and “targeted education to include new residents” as aspirations for the utility

provider/council, not as project-specific obligations or pre-conditions for permission.

7. Clarify the indicative capacity

- Re-assess whether the “approximately 100 dwellings” is achievable on site when also requesting enhanced landscaping, BNG, open space and drainage constraints, tree coverage and other requirements that the draft Local Plan will impose.

With these modifications, PP44 would still secure the Council’s objectives on character, coalescence and infrastructure, but would do so in a way that is proportionate, evidence-led and capable of implementation on the ground, allowing the western parcel to make a timely and effective contribution to housing delivery at West Bergholt without being unfairly constrained by the more sensitive eastern land.