



# STANFORDS

ESTABLISHED 1879

## Colchester City Council Preferred Options Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2025

Draft Planning Policy Comments For and on Behalf of Stanfords Colchester LLP

**Section: 8**

### **Policy H5: Specialist Housing including Housing for an Aging Population**

Policy H5 demonstrates a strong commitment to meeting the needs of older people, individuals with physical disabilities, and those requiring care or supported living. However, it fails to explicitly recognise neurodiversity as a distinct and important consideration within specialist housing provision. Neurodivergent individuals such as those with autism, ADHD, or sensory processing differences often require environments that address cognitive and sensory needs, not just physical accessibility. The policy's emphasis on "adequate amenity space" and "integration with the existing community" is positive, but without guidance on sensory-friendly design, clear wayfinding, quiet zones, and adaptable spaces, developments risk excluding a significant population group. This omission undermines the goal of creating inclusive communities and does not align with emerging best practice in inclusive design.

### **Recommendations**

#### **1. Explicit Inclusion of Neurodiversity**

Amend the policy to recognise neurodiversity as a key consideration in specialist and supported housing. This should include individuals with autism, ADHD, and other cognitive or sensory differences who may require tailored environments.

#### **2. Design Principles for Cognitive and Sensory Accessibility**

Incorporate requirements for sensory-friendly design features such as:

- Controlled lighting and acoustics to reduce sensory overload.
- Clear and intuitive wayfinding systems.
- Quiet zones and adaptable communal spaces.
- Predictable layouts to support comfort and reduce anxiety.

### 3. Reference to Inclusive Design Standards

Cross-reference national guidance such as:

- BS 8300 (Design of buildings for accessibility and inclusion).
- Equality Act 2010 obligations for non-discrimination.
- Emerging best practice on neurodiversity-friendly environments (e.g., guidance from the Design Council and Autism Design Guide).

### 4. Evidence-Based Need Assessment

- Require housing needs assessments to include data on neurodivergent populations and their specific requirements, ensuring provision aligns with local demographics.
- Work with Essex County Council to improve data collection for neurodiverse needs for the Supported and Specialist Housing and Accommodation Needs Assessment