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Colchester City Council Preferred Options Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation 2025

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

Section: 3

Policy ST3: Spatial Strategy

1. Growth in All Villages

Policy ST3 currently limits growth to large, medium, and 'some' small settlements. We believe this approach risks undermining the long-term viability of smaller communities. All villages should be allowed a proportionate level of growth to:

- Sustain local services and facilities;
- Support natural demographic changes; and
- Maintain social and economic resilience.

Restricting growth to selected villages could lead to service decline and increased reliance on larger settlements, contrary to the principles of sustainable development.

2. Settlement Boundaries

The policy appears to treat settlement boundaries as rigid cut-off points for development. While boundaries are useful for guiding growth, they should not act as absolute limits. Flexibility is essential to allow logical extensions where:

- Infrastructure capacity exists; and
- Development respects local character and environmental constraints.

This approach would better reflect natural growth patterns and avoid artificial constraints on community evolution.

3. Recognition of Natural Growth Patterns

Communities evolve organically, and planning should accommodate this.

Incremental growth across all settlements rather than concentrating development

in urban areas and strategic sites will help maintain balanced growth and reduce pressure on infrastructure in larger locations.

4. Balancing Protection and Growth

We agree with the need to protect sensitive landscapes and heritage. However, this should not preclude modest, well-designed growth in rural areas. A nuanced approach where environmental sensitivity informs scale and design rather than outright exclusion will better balance conservation with community viability.

5. Inclusion of the B1025 as a Key Transport Corridor

The draft Policy ST3 fails to identify the B1025 as a key transport corridor, despite its undeniable role as the primary arterial route connecting Mersea Island and South Colchester to the city centre. This omission overlooks the strategic importance of the B1025 in facilitating access to services, employment, and leisure opportunities for communities in the southern part of the city. The corridor provides a direct link to the urban core, supporting economic activity and tourism, and its function as a critical connector should be recognised alongside other major routes. Excluding the B1025 from the spatial strategy risks underestimating the infrastructure capacity and growth potential of South Colchester, which is essential for balanced development across the wider area.

Summary of Recommendations

- Allow proportionate growth in all villages to sustain services and reflect natural growth patterns;
- Treat settlement boundaries as flexible guides, not rigid barriers;
- Retain the hierarchy concept but rename categories for clarity and strategic emphasis;
- Include the B1025 as a key transport corridor; and
- Ensure environmental protection is balanced with the need for inclusive, sustainable growth.