

# Colchester Preferred Options Local Plan (November 2025)

Representations by Richborough

Land North of Halstead Road, Eight Ash Green

January 2026

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**Client**

Richborough

**Our reference**

PP0074

January 2026

# 1. Vision and Approach to Local Plan

**Please indicate if you support or object.**

Support/Object/**Comment**

**Please provide your comments below.**

- 1.1 Richborough does not consider the Vision as drafted to be effective as it does not reference meeting housing needs, or housing in general.
- 1.2 Paragraph 11a of the NPPF is clear that plans should *“promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area”* and that *“strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas”*.
- 1.3 Paragraph 61 of the NPPF also states that *“the overall aim should be to meet an area’s identified housing need, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community”*, and requires that *“a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed”*.
- 1.4 Richborough is therefore of the view that the ‘Vision’ should reflect the key challenge referenced above in respect of meeting housing needs throughout the plan period and acknowledge clearly within the Vision that development needs are to be met in full, including for market and affordable housing.

## 2. Policy ST3: Spatial Strategy

**Please indicate if you support or object.**

Support/Object/**Comment**

**Please provide your comments below.**

- 2.1 Richborough has concerns about the stated plan period within Policy ST3: Spatial Strategy. The Spatial Strategy confirms *“The Plan makes provision for growth and supporting infrastructure across the Colchester area to 2041.”*
- 2.2 Paragraph 22 of the NPPF relates to the plan period and states inter alia:  
  
*“Strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption, to anticipate and respond to long-term requirements and opportunities, such as those arising from major improvements in infrastructure...”*
- 2.3 Colchester’s most recent Local Development Scheme was published in March 2025 and suggests adoption of the Local Plan in May 2027. This timescale could be considered overly optimistic given that it is not intended to submit the Plan for examination until September 2026, and the typical length of time for examination is around one year<sup>1</sup>. This would mean that on adoption, the Local Plan would only look ahead 14 years. To ensure the Local Plan is consistent with the NPPF the plan period must be extended to at least 2042.
- 2.4 Policy ST3 also establishes the settlement hierarchy for the City and confirms that Eight Ash Green is within the fourth tier; a Medium Settlement. Paragraph 12.25 of the Regulation 18 Local Plan states that Medium Settlements are capable of accommodating growth appropriate to the size, scale and infrastructure of the settlement.
- 2.5 Para 12.31 goes on to highlight the facilities which are available in EAG. CCC have also prepared documents to justify the proposed spatial strategy; Settlements Evidence and Spatial Strategy Topic Paper. We will review these and express support for the proposed spatial strategy and confirm the sustainability of Eight Ash Green as a Medium Settlement, which is capable of accommodating growth of the scale proposed.
- 2.6 The Spatial Strategy Topic Paper that supports the consultation also confirms that Eight Ash Green is a sustainable settlement with “a range of services and facilities” (paragraph 5.32).
- 2.7 Furthermore, the Sustainability Appraisal confirms that *“All of the sites [in Eight Ash Green] are located some distance from the nearest town, district or local centre. However, Eight Ash Green is relatively well related to Tollgate District Centre and the range of services and facilities at this location.”*

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<sup>1</sup> PINS - Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations - 27 November 2025

- 2.8 The Colchester Settlement Evidence: Stage 1 notes that there are opportunities in Eight Ash Green to meet day to day needs and highlights the opportunities as follows:

*“Eight Ash Green village is reasonably well served by facilities including a village hall, various shops (a farm shop, a convenience store, garden centre, petrol station and a chip shop), a beauty salon and a public house. There is also a primary school located within the Choats Corner settlement boundary. The Holiday Inn hotel offers gym membership. Foxes Farm offers seasonal activities bringing in large numbers of day visitors.”* Page 38

- 2.9 It is clear that Eight Ash Green is a sustainable settlement with a number of facilities and amenities within walking distance and also benefits from being relatively well related to Tollgate District Centre where larger shopping opportunities can be reached by a short car journey.
- 2.10 Richborough supports the inclusion of Eight Ash Green as a Medium Settlement capable of accommodating the level of growth proposed in the emerging LP. The site being promoted by Richborough (PP32), whilst in the Aldham Parsh Council boundary, is on the edge of Eight Ash Green and Richborough supports its emerging allocation and inclusion within the Eight Ash Green settlement boundary.

### 3. Policy ST5 – Colchester’s Housing Need

**Please indicate if you support or object.**

Support/Object/Comment

**Please provide your comments below.**

- 3.1 Policy ST5 establishes a need to plan for 20,800 new homes over the plan period to 2041 using the Governments Standard Method (SM) calculation for establishing housing need. The emerging Local Plan references this as 1,300 dwellings per annum which is a slight increase from the actual SM figure of 1,293 (May 2025). Richborough supports this approach to establishing an annual housing need.
- 3.2 Policy ST5 also identifies a total supply of 21,106 dwellings which incorporates a supply buffer of only 1.45%. Therefore, should the plan period be required to extend to 2042, as referenced elsewhere in our representations, the current supply is insufficient and additional sites will need to be found.
- 3.3 Richborough considers a 10% buffer to be imperative for Colchester Council as the housing supply relies on the delivery of significant urban extensions including Northeast Colchester (PP9), Land South of A12 and Marks Tey Village (PP17) and Land North of A120, Marks Tey (PP18). Developments of this scale (each between 1,000 and 2,000 homes) can be slow, or even fail, to deliver homes at the rate projected.
- 3.4 The Infrastructure Audit and Delivery Plan Stage 3 Report (2025) identifies a funding gap of £811 million, of which 46% relate to transport projects (paragraph 6.2.5). A supply buffer of 10% would ensure developer contributions could be sought to help the funding gap and therefore address potential delivery concerns of these required infrastructure projects.
- 3.5 To ensure the Council avoids potential future delays to the adoption of the Local Plan, and to ensure the LP is effective, Richborough considers it necessary for the next stage of consultation to be based on a plan period to 2042 and an increased supply buffer of 10% to provide flexibility in the supply and improve the prospect of achieving the identified quantitative and qualitative needs for housing.
- 3.6 Table ST5.2 lists all emerging allocations and includes the site promoted by Richborough adjacent to the settlement boundary for Eight Ash Green (ref: PP32). Richborough welcomes the allocation and agrees with the suggested capacity of 250 dwellings. Further information regarding the sites suitability and deliverability is provided in our response to site specific policy PP32.

## 4. Policy PP32 – Land North of Halstead Road and West of Fiddlers Wood, Eight Ash Green

**Please indicate if you support or object.**

Support/Object/Comment

**Please provide your comments below.**

4.1 Richborough supports the allocation of this site and broadly agrees with the drafted site-specific Policy wording.

4.2 Richborough submitted an outline planning application at this site in June 2025 for up to 250 dwellings (application reference: 251310). The comments below provide Richborough's views on the proposed policy and outlines how the applicant addressed the emerging policy requirements through the application submission:

**In addition to the infrastructure and mitigation requirements identified in Policy ST 7 and subject to compliance with all other relevant policies, development will be supported on land within the area identified on the policies map which provides:**

**a) Approximately 250 new dwellings of a mix and type of housing to meet evidenced needs and be compatible with surrounding development;**

4.3 Richborough supports the proposed capacity of 250 dwellings at this site. The application is made in outline and therefore the housing mix is not being determined at this stage. The submitted Design and Access Statement and Planning Statement confirm that the site can accommodate a range of house types and sizes that meets local housing needs and delivers affordable housing at a rate of 30% (70% social rented and 30% shared ownership) which is compliant with emerging Policy H2. The delivery of 30% affordable housing in this location will help meet the affordable housing need identified in the Local Housing Needs Assessment

**b) Safe and suitable site access to required highway design standards. The point of vehicular access is to be agreed with the Highway Authority and it will need to be demonstrated that the proposal would not be detrimental to highway capacity and safety;**

4.4 Richborough supports this element of the Policy.

4.5 The application is submitted alongside a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan which include an assessment of the proposed development on highway capacity, outline how active and sustainable travel measures will be incorporated into the development and demonstrate how the site can be safely accessed by vehicle, including waste vehicles.

4.6 The applicant is continuing to engage with ECC Highways as part of the application process and expect to resolve all outstanding queries.

**c) Provide 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, also securing active travel links and connections to the settlement and to Tollgate District Centre;**

- 4.7 Richborough supports the inclusion of this requirement.
- 4.8 The proposed development retains the existing Public Right of Way through the site and provides links to the existing footpath from the site through Fiddlers Wood. The Landscape Strategy Plan submitted with the application also shows a series of footpaths through the site and open space for the enjoyment of residents. This includes a circular path round the proposed development parcels and a circular route around the SUDS basins at the northern extent of the site.
- 4.9 The applicant has given consideration to how active and sustainable travel links could be improved by the development. Through discussions with ECC Highways the applicant has agreed to provide two new bus stops on Halstead Road to ensure the existing bus services are accessible and usable for the new residents. These services will enable residents to reach Tollgate District Centre.

**d) The adjacent Fiddlers Wood Co43 LoWS (ancient woodland) must be safeguarded, buffered and protected from recreational pressure associated with new housing;**

- 4.10 The applicant supports the inclusion of this requirement.
- 4.11 The application is submitted alongside an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA). The application documents have demonstrated how impacts on Fiddlers Wood from the proposed development are to be minimised.
- 4.12 Appendix E of the Sustainability Appraisal confirms in respect of the application site:
- “The Biodiversity Protection and BNG Study concluded that development would lead to harm to biodiversity. The site has low ecological value, but is adjacent to Co43 Fiddlers Wood, which consists of Ancient Wood Irreplaceable Habitat and Priority Habitat. A buffer is required to avoid harm to the ancient woodland.”*
- 4.13 The applicant has proposed a 30m development buffer is proposed to the Ancient Woodland which will comprise dense scrub and tree planting at the 15m closest to the woodland. This prevents the root protection areas from damage as well as reducing the likelihood of house pets venturing into the woodland.
- 4.14 The existing footpath link through the Woodland is to be retained although there is not anticipated to be any additional recreational pressure on the woodland as the footpath is clearly defined and the Ancient Woodland is subject to management plans to reduce recreational impacts.
- 4.15 ECC Ecology have raised no objection to the proposed development and the applicant is working towards addressing the outstanding queries from the Woodland Trust.

**e) Onsite BNG measures should focus on creating woodland, scrub and grassland habitats as buffers to the adjacent ancient woodland. New boundary hedgerows should be planted in gaps and the condition of existing hedgerows should be enhanced;**

- 4.16 Richborough supports the inclusion of this requirement.
- 4.17 The application is supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain Metric assessment, an EclA and a Landscape Strategy Plan which demonstrate the sites suitability for large areas of soft landscaping, including improvements required to achieve a biodiversity net gain onsite.
- 4.18 A final planting plan and schedule will be submitted to the Council for agreement with a future reserved matters application.
- 4.19 The Environment Agency and ECC Ecology have raised no objection to the proposed development.

**f) Support will be given to delivering grassland or woodland habitat within or adjacent to the site to support the delivery of the strategic creation opportunities in the Essex LNRS;**

- 4.20 Richborough supports the inclusion of this requirement.
- 4.21 The application is supported by a BNG Metric assessment which includes grassland and woodland as an “on-site habitat” to be created. Further details of onsite planting will be agreed as part of a future reserved matters application.

**g) Screening comprising locally appropriate tree belts, hedgerows and/or woodland will be required along the site boundaries to ensure that development is sensitively integrated into the landscape to reflect and reinforce rural character;**

- 4.22 Richborough supports the inclusion of this requirement.
- 4.23 The applicant has submitted a Landscape Strategy Plan to demonstrate how the site could feasibly accommodate the level of development proposed with a suitable landscaping strategy. The Landscape strategy accommodates both the retention of trees (including two veteran), as well as the provision of additional planting across key areas of the site:
- Provision of additional landscaping at the edges of the development that helps screen the new dwellings from local and long-range views whilst also retaining key views out of the application site;
  - Provision of a green buffer to the Public Right of Way through the site,
  - The delivery of a central green corridor in a north south direction to retain views north,
  - Provision of a 30m buffer to the Ancient Woodland in the form of a hard 15m buffer of mixed native scrub and a further 15m of mixed scrub, grassland, Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), scattered trees and native hedgerow.

- 4.24 The applicant has also had regard to the Landscape Character Assessment (2025) and the opportunities and strategy relative to the Great Tey Farmland Plateau LCA, within which lies Eight Ash Green. The Assessment identifies a potential issue in the form of *“poorly integrated settlements edges which are exposed in the relatively open landscape”*. The applicant has proactively worked with ECC Landscape as part of the application to increase the amount of planting proposed on the northern boundary of the residential development parcels help screen the development from long-range views and to help create a new strong settlement edge.
- 4.25 The Assessment also references an increase in extent and quality of field boundaries and re-introducing traditional orchards as part of the Landscape Strategy for the LCA. The Landscape Strategy Plan forming part of the planning application shows the provision of a community orchard on the western boundary and supplementary planting to enhance the existing site/field boundaries.
- 4.26 The Council’s Tree Officer has raised no objection to the proposed development and the applicant is continuing to engage with ECC Landscape.

**h) Development must conserve, and where appropriate, enhance the significance of heritage assets (including any contribution made by their settings). Designated heritage assets close to the allocated site includes three Grade II Listed Buildings as informed by the stage 1 HIA;**

- 4.27 Richborough would recommend removing the final sentence of this element of the Policy as it is unclear and therefore not effective. The Council’s Stage 1 HIA does not list or identify the heritage assets considered to affect the emerging allocations, neither does it provide any commentary or justification for what effects the proposed development may have on the Listed Buildings. The inclusion of the first sentence ensures a heritage assessment is undertaken to support any application. There is therefore no need for the second sentence unless there is a particular heritage asset or potential heritage impact of concern.
- 4.28 The application is supported by a Heritage Assessment which summarises the results of a detailed assessment of designated heritage assets in the surrounds of the site. This identifies two assets in the vicinity of the site for further assessment on the basis of distance and intervisibility. These assets are the Grade II Listed Mantills Farmhouse and the Grade I Listed Church of All Saints at Fordham. A third asset, Grade II Listed Fiddlers Farmhouse lies 220m east of the site but is beyond Fiddler’s Wood and residential development so the application site is not considered to contribute to the heritage significance of Fiddlers Farmhouse.
- 4.29 The land within the application site lies to the north of Mantills Farmhouse, beyond intervening mature vegetation which limits any visibility between the two. There is also no known historical or functional association between the land within the application site and the heritage asset. The land within the site is not considered to contribute to the heritage significance of Mantills Farmhouse through setting and will result in no harm to its heritage significance.
- 4.30 There are views towards the Grade I Listed Church of All Saints from the wider landscape which allow the location of the asset and the settlement of Fordham to be understood, but

do not allow for its architectural and historic interest to be experienced, including from within the site. On this basis, the land within the site is not considered to contribute to the heritage significance of the church.

4.31 There are no outstanding heritage concerns or queries from statutory consultees.

**i) Liaise with ECC as the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority on mineral and waste**

4.32 Richborough notes the site is within a Mineral Safeguarding Area for salt extraction. The applicant engaged with ECC Minerals and Waste during the determination of the application and it was agreed that the extractable area of the site falls below the 5ha threshold due to the onsite constraints in the form of an underground gas pipe and its easement, a HSE exclusion zone and a 30m easement to the adjacent Ancient Woodland.

4.33 The ECC Minerals and Waste team agreed that there was no requirement to submit a Minerals Resource Assessment to support the application.

4.34 Richborough notes therefore that the inclusion of this requirement may be unnecessary.

**j) Contributions towards the provision of a new village hall in Eight Ash Green.**

4.35 The applicant does not oppose this request but notes that there is an existing village hall in Aldham and Eight Ash Green. There has been no request for a contribution towards a new village hall as part of the application consultation process.

**k) Any site-specific infrastructure requirements from the IDP (likely to include education provision, highway mitigation, water and wastewater and specific community / open space provision).**

4.36 Statutory consultees have requested financial contributions as part of the application process and the applicant has considered these requests having regard to their compliance with the CIL tests. The applicant is agreeable to securing financial contributions via a Section 106 Agreement which will be drafted in due course.

**l) Before granting planning consent, wintering bird surveys will be undertaken at the appropriate time of year to identify any offsite functional habitat. In the unlikely event that significant numbers are identified, development must firstly avoid impacts. Where this is not possible, development must be phased to deliver habitat creation and management either on or off-site to mitigate any significant impacts. Any such habitat must be provided and fully functional before any development takes place which would affect significant numbers of SPA birds.**

4.37 Richborough questions the necessity of this element of the site specific Policy as it appears to duplicate the requirements of emerging Policy EN3 which expects the submission of appropriate ecological surveys with planning applications.

4.38 The EclA submitted with the application confirms that the site is located outside the Zone of Influence (Zol) of four statutory protected sites that are designated for significant

assemblages of over wintering bird species. Non-breeding 'wintering' birds are typically wild fowl such as ducks and geese which migrate to the UK over winter (October to February). All designated sites within the ZoI are designated for migratory duck species or native waterfowl, none are designated for populations of geese. No aquatic habitat was present that could support duck or other waterfowl species nor are any large lakes within 2km of the site. The terrestrial habit on-site was unsuitable for ducks and waterfowl being primarily active arable fields.

- 4.39 The EclA concluded that the site is unlikely to form functionally linked land to any designated sites due to the distance of the site from suitable wintering bird receptors and the unsuitability of the habitats present (due to regular management). Non-breeding 'wintering' birds were considered to be likely absent and further surveys were scoped out of the assessment.
- 4.40 The Environment Agency and ECC Ecology have raised no objection to the proposed development.

## 5. Policy NZ1: Net Zero Carbon Development

**Please indicate if you support or object.**

Support/**Object**/Comment

**Please provide your comments below.**

- 5.1 Policy NZ1 requires all new buildings to be designed and built as Net Zero Carbon in operation. The Policy requires new buildings to be ultra-low energy, be fossil fuel free, generate renewable energy on-site and to at least match predicted annual energy use. The Policy provides technical requirements in respect of space heating demands and energy use intensity limits.
- 5.2 Richborough supports measures to encourage climate resilience, mitigation and adaptation, although requiring all buildings, including residential, to be Net Zero Carbon in operation is not supported as it is too onerous and not a national sustainability standard. For effectiveness and consistency, the policy should seek to use national sustainability standards where possible.
- 5.3 The Government's Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) of December 2023 states that the Government does not expect plan-makers to set local energy efficiency standards for buildings that go beyond current or planned building regulations.
- 5.4 The WMS clearly states that any planning policies that propose local energy efficiency standards for buildings that go beyond current or planned building regulations should be rejected at examination if they do not have a well-reasoned and robustly costed rationale with evidence around impacts on schemes' viability within the local authority area.
- 5.5 Richborough consider it critical for these parts of the Policy to be removed from the emerging LP and for Colchester to accord with the WMS by relying on the standards that are set and updated nationally through Part L of the building regulations and the forthcoming roll-out of Future Homes Standards.
- 5.6 Richborough notes that the Viability Assessment (2025) includes £7,500 per unit for Future Homes Standards and an additional 5-8% on build costs to achieve additional net zero initiatives. While the Viability Assessment has not concluded that these costs are unviable in the majority of scenarios, there will of course be instances where these requirements cannot be achieved and investors are discouraged from developing sites in the Council area.
- 5.7 Richborough does not consider it appropriate or reasonable to establish a requirement for renewable energy generation on-site. Whilst there is scope for some sites to deliver renewable energy generating initiatives, this will significantly hamper market attractiveness for some developers, particularly the small to medium sized housebuilders.
- 5.8 To ensure the policy is effective, Richborough suggests an amendment so the Policy refers to national standards in the form of building regulations and the emerging Future Homes Standard. This ensures a consistent, clear and readily understood requirement across the country, which will assist in boosting housing delivery.