

Wakes Colne Parish Council

Regulation 18 – Colchester Local Plan

Preferred Options (2025–2041)

Introduction

Wakes Colne Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Preferred Options Local Plan. While we acknowledge the need to provide new housing, we strongly object to the **scale and impact** of the proposed allocation at Wakes Colne.

PP28 – Land West of Station Road, Wakes Colne (200 homes)

The proposed allocation represents a **very substantial expansion** of a small rural village with limited services and infrastructure.

Key concerns include:

- The scale of development being disproportionate to the size and function of Wakes Colne. Such a development will virtually double the population of Wakes Colne.
- Increased traffic and safety risks on Station Road, which is narrow, rural in character and poorly suited to heavy traffic
- Increased parking pressure around Chappel and Wakes Colne railway station and the East Anglian Railway Museum
- Lack of safe and continuous pedestrian paths and cycling routes, particularly on Wakes Street & Colchester Road on the A1124 and Station Road
- The cumulative, negative impact of excessive development in neighbouring villages along the A1124 corridor.
- Risk of urban sprawl and loss of rural settlement character
- There is no assurance that housing will NOT be extended to the 8 hectares, currently allocated to Open Space in PP28
- The Policy should state that 200 dwellings is the maximum allocation
- That the land in question is arable land under continuous crop production and is shown as Grade 2, the best and most versatile, on the Provisional Agricultural Land Classification map.
- The cumulative impact of development at the western edge of Wakes Colne, which include proposals for land west of Station Road PP28 and land at Wakes Hall Business Centre (PEP12)

Infrastructure Capacity

- Wakes Colne shares the Chappel primary school. An increase of c.235 dwellings across Chappel and Wakes Colne villages will increase primary school requirements beyond its existing capacity
- Neither Wakes Colne nor Chappel have any medical or pharmacy facilities. The Earls Colne Surgery is having to support the increase in population, not just from Chappel & Wakes Colne, but also other surrounding villages, which are in turn expanding due to Colchester and Braintree housing targets.
- The 'Gainsborough Line' train service runs between Sudbury and Marks Tey, with connectivity to London and Norwich mainline. This is a branch line service and runs on a single line track. It is low-frequency with low with high capacity (depending on rush-hour commuter use). Trains cannot be extended for an increase in passengers, due to platform length restrictions at Marks Tey. Whilst helpful for commuters to London, the branch line is of little value to residents visiting the centre of Colchester.
- The no.88 bus service from Halsted, which runs along the A1124, picking up passengers and school children is oversubscribed with reports of some children not being able to get to school due to no spaces on the buses.
- Anglian Water infrastructure is out-dated, and drains are failing on a regular basis in Wakes Colne. Emergency repairs and planned repairs are a regular occurrence on the A1124 and require traffic management systems to be installed and tankers to be used to manually drain the sewage. Tankers were employed for a non-stop period 24/7 for 11 days during April 2025.
- The villages along the River Colne have experienced many flooding and near flooding situations. An increase in homes and impermeable surfaces will increase overland flow.

The Parish Council remains unconvinced that essential infrastructure, particularly highways, education, healthcare, drainage and utilities, can be delivered in a timely or sustainable manner to support a development of this size.

Wakes Colne Parish Council wish to clearly state that any proposed development must deliver clear, tangible benefits for both Chappel and Wakes Colne, while protecting the villages' character, services, and landscape.

The following principles are essential.

Community Infrastructure

- **Village Hall:** A new or extended village hall will be required to service the increased population. It should reflect the design and distinctive features of the existing building and be in-keeping with the character of Chappel and Wakes Colne. It should include a new children's play area and provide adequate parking. *Any new features round the Village Hall must be mindful of the preservation of the badger sett that exists in the small, wooded area directly adjacent to the Village Hall.*
- **Primary School:** Wakes Colne shares primary school facilities with Chappel. Provision of additional space must be considered either by way of additional classrooms or new premises.
- **Healthcare Provision:** A doctors' surgery providing GP / pharmacy services for Chappel, Wakes Colne, and surrounding villages is essential.
- **Protection of Local Shop and Post Office:** No convenience retail should be permitted within the new development that would undermine the viability of the existing post office and village shop, which are highly valued community assets.

Transport, Traffic and Road Safety

- **Bypass / Relief Road:** A bypass is required to remove through-traffic, particularly from Bures, and from the narrow and dangerous section of Station Road. This must include a wide, continuous, and safe pedestrian pavement along its entire length.
- **A1124 Junction:** The location of the bypass junction with the A1124 must be re-examined to ensure uncompromised safety, and to also take into consideration the effect of such a junction on the residential houses on Wakes Street e.g. vehicle headlights, additional traffic and noise. Consideration should be given to installing a roundabout or traffic signals at the junction for road safety reasons.
- **Station Road Safety:** A comprehensive package of traffic-calming measures is long overdue to improve pedestrian safety along Station Road. This is a residential road of 55 dwellings, where residents walk to access the village facilities, school, train station, shop and churches. It makes for a dangerous pedestrian journey, with its lack of dedicated walkways, pinch points and unacceptable 30mph speed limit.
- **Spring Gardens Road**
Developers must be sympathetic to Spring Gardens in any highways planning and not encourage vehicles to be tempted to use this narrow residential road as an alternative route.
- **The Street /Chappel Hill**
Developers must be sympathetic to The Street and Chapel Hill in any highways planning and not encourage vehicles to be tempted to use this narrow residential road as an alternative route.

Footways and Crossings

- **A1124:** A complete overhaul of pavements between Wakes Hall Park, Wakes Hall Business Park, Lane Road, the proposed bypass junction, and Wakes Colne Post Office is required, with pedestrian and cyclist safety as a priority.
- **Pedestrian Crossing:** Safe pedestrian crossing facilities on the A1124 are essential to link Chappel School, the village hall, post office and shop, railway station, East Anglian Railway Museum, The Swan public house, and all three churches.

Walking and Cycling Connectivity

It is important in this rural parish that pedestrian /cycle /bridle rights of way are included within proposals with considered links to the wider area. These must create safe and attractive, alternative ways of transport for people and form a valued part of the green infrastructure network. The development should deliver the first phase, a high-quality, safe, off-road walking, cycling route between Halstead and Colchester, starting with pedestrian and cycle access between Wakes Hall Business Park, through the site to Chappel and Wakes Colne Station.

Housing

- **Affordable Housing:** Affordable housing should be fully ring-fenced for people with a strong local connection, including existing residents, those with family ties, people working locally, or those born in the parish.
- **Housing Mix:** The development should provide a balanced range of homes, including family housing, one-bedroom homes or apartments for first-time buyers and single people, and smaller homes and bungalows suitable for residents choosing to downsize.
- **High-Quality Design:** Architecture and materials should reflect the Victorian character of Chappel Station and its iconic viaduct

Heritage

The development should contribute to the repair, maintenance, and long-term protection of Chappel Station and the Grade II listed railway viaduct.

Landscape, Biodiversity and the Colne Valley

The site lies adjacent to the Colne Valley, an important landscape and ecological corridor. The Parish Council is concerned about:

- Loss of wildlife habitats and ecological connectivity
- Increased flood and drainage pressures
- Harm to the rural setting of the village

We believe the environmental constraints of this area have been underestimated and would be urging the developer to ensure:

- **Streets and Trees:** Generous, tree-lined streets, wide verges, and footpaths should be provided, with retention of the mature oak trees along Jupes Hill and Station Road.
- **Open Space and Landscape:** Substantial public open space must respond sensitively to the exceptional landscape of the Colne Valley.
- **Private Gardens:** Serious consideration to the size and connectivity of private gardens. Gardens are one of the most important habitats for UK wildlife as well as giving owners opportunity of private recreation.
- **Biodiversity and Drainage:** Wildlife-friendly sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), including ponds and wetland areas, should be incorporated and could form a local nature reserve.
- **Ancient Woodland:** The ancient woodland on the site must be fully protected, with permissive public access routes and interpretation boards where appropriate

Conclusion

Wakes Colne Parish Council strongly request the Colchester City Council reconsider or significantly reduce the scale of allocation PP28.

At a minimum, we request the following requirements be added to PP28:

- A clear statement that 200 dwellings is the maximum for the site, not an approximate number which can be expanded.
- Require planning applications to demonstrate that infrastructure capacity exists or can be delivered.
- Require proposals to enhance and protect the landscape, biodiversity and rural character of the Colne Valley
- **Require proposals to include a masterplan for the whole village**
- The planning authority should note that the land in question is arable land under continuous crop production and is shown as Grade 2, Best and Most Versatile, on the Provisional Agricultural Land Classification map. This should be considered when deciding whether developing this land can be regarded as sustainable.
- Any future proposals for development of land between the PEP12 Wakes Hall Business Centre and the PP28 housing allocation (approximately 200 dwellings west of Station Road) **would not be supported.** This land currently forms an important open gap between

Wakes Colne village and the business park/Wakes Colne Hall and plays a vital role in maintaining settlement separation and rural character. Although improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity would be welcomed, this should not be used to justify the loss of this important open land.

- Making safety a priority for pedestrians to Station Road is critical to the whole development.

Without these inclusions and considerations, the Parish Council considers the allocation to be unsound.

Ends