

Wakes Colne Parish Council Consultation Response

Regulation 18 – Colchester Local Plan
Preferred Options (2025–2041)

Policy: PEP12 – Land at Wakes Hall Business Centre

Introduction

Wakes Colne Parish Council wishes to raise significant concerns regarding Policy PEP12 – Land at Wakes Hall Business Centre.

The proposed extension of the existing business centre would result in further encroachment into open countryside at the western edge of Wakes Colne, leading to erosion of the village's rural character and its landscape setting. While employment development is often promoted on the basis of providing local jobs, the Parish Council notes that this is not always the outcome, particularly where development serves a wider commercial catchment rather than identified local employment needs. This expansion is likely to result in increased flood risks, and traffic volumes on the A1124 and through surrounding villages.

Key Concerns

The Parish Council is particularly concerned about the cumulative impact of development in this location.

Any future 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.

Additional concerns include:

- Increased traffic on the A1124 and through surrounding villages
- The scale and massing of large buildings and extensive hardstanding
- Increased surface water run-off contributing to existing flooding issues
- Ongoing sewage and drainage capacity constraints in the area

Rural villages such as Wakes Colne are characterised by open spaces and agricultural land that provide both physical and visual breaks at settlement edges. These spaces are essential in maintaining settlement identity, preventing ribbon development and coalescence, and safeguarding the wider rural landscape.

Principles for Future Development

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

The following principles are considered essential:

- Any additional business units should be of a similar scale, design and appearance to the existing buildings e.g. CLASS E
- g) i) office or ii) the research and development of products or processes or iii) any industrial process, (which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the immediate area).
- Environmentally friendly and permeable materials should be used to assist drainage and reduce flood risk
- Solar panels should be installed on roofs and other suitable areas
- Bus shelters should be provided at existing bus stops on both sides of the A1124 near the business centre entrance
- Safe and direct pedestrian and cycle connectivity should be provided to Chappel and Wakes Colne railway station
- Continuous and safe pedestrian pavements should be provided from the business centre to the village post office and convenience store

Green Buffer Designation

The Parish Council considers that the open land to the east of Lane Road, extending to the edge of the proposed PP28 housing allocation, should be designated within the revised Local Plan as a “local green buffer” or equivalent protected open space. This designation would help to:

- Prevent settlement coalescence and ribbon development
- Protect the local landscape from further encroachment
- Preserve the setting and significance of Wakes Colne Hall

- Safeguard the character and appearance of Wakes Colne and Chappel and the 'Colne Valley'.

Conclusions

Wakes Colne Parish Council strongly requests:

- Designation of the open land east of Lane Road, between the PEP12 and PP28 allocations, as a local green buffer or equivalent protected open space
- Evidence-led justification for the need for employment land at this location, including consideration of alternative sites
- Safeguarding of the rural setting and character of Wakes Colne and Chappel
- Clear recognition and assessment of cumulative impacts arising from adjacent allocations
- Building design that is in keeping with the existing structures and business activity
- Clear and safe pedestrian and cycle connectivity between the Business Centre, village centre and railway station
- The use of environmentally sustainable materials and design principles

Wakes Colne Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to work constructively with the Local Planning Authority and developers to achieve a balanced and sensitive approach to development that respects the village's character, landscape setting and heritage assets, while delivering appropriate outcomes for residents.

Without these inclusions and considerations, the Parish Council considers the PEP12 allocation to be unsound.

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