

Boyer

# Mersea Road, Abberton

Colchester City Council Local Plan Preferred  
Options

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**REPORT CONTROL**

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## **APPENDICES**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Boyer has been instructed by Hopkins Homes to review the Colchester City Council Local Plan Regulation 18 Preferred Options document which has been published for public consultation between 26 November 2025 and 14 January 2026.
- 1.2 Within these representations, we seek to promote land at Mersea Road, Abberton for residential uses and associated infrastructure to support the Council with their housing delivery requirements and targets over the plan period. The parcels of land provide an opportunity for residential development to come forward via a phased approach in a sustainable location that is available to deliver over the plan period and future plans.
- 1.3 Alongside promoting the sites at Mersea Road, Abberton, the representations also provide a review and commentary on the policies and targets published by the Council within their Preferred Options consultation document. Commentary on Strategic and Non-Strategic policies along with the Council vision and objectives is also provided.
- 1.4 Whilst it is not possible to comment on the soundness of the Plan at this early stage, as the Local Plan Review progresses it will need to be prepared in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework including whether the plan is a) Positively prepared, b) Justified, c) Effective, and d) Consistent with National Policy. Where appropriate our representations relate to the tests of soundness and Government requirements.
- 1.5 Hopkins Homes are keen to continue working closely with the City Council through the plan making activities to ensure that emerging policies and site allocation requirements meet the tests of soundness detailed in the NPPF. Hopkins Homes are also committed to engaging further and promoting the site at Abberton through future rounds of consultation and examination as detailed in the Council's Local Development Scheme.

## 2. VISION AND APPROACH TO LOCAL PLAN

- 2.1 The Preferred Options consultation documents sets out a vision for the Colchester Local Plan which will guide the focus and direction of growth in the area.
- 2.2 The Council acknowledge that the vision, themes and objectives have been informed by wider stakeholder engagement to which Hopkins Homes has participated previously.
- 2.3 We are pleased to see that the Vision acknowledges that growth is inevitable but brings with it change and opportunity. Future development proposals in Colchester can address economic, environmental and social needs and deliver sustainable development over the plan period.
- 2.4 Directing growth to sustainable settlements such as Abberton will ensure that the Vision outlined in the Local Plan can be achieved in accordance with the four themes that are central to the Council's plan and their considerations to date.
- 2.5 The Vision is supported by four themes of healthy, vibrant and diverse places, sustainable, welcoming inclusive communities and well-connected.
- 2.6 Within each theme the Local Plan includes a series of objectives which are ambitious but allow for flexibility and are not too rigid. The objectives contribute to the delivery of sustainable development across Colchester.
- 2.7 Although we broadly support the Vision, Themes and Objectives set out in the Local Plan, the Council should acknowledge the partnership role that is required over the plan period. For the Local Plan to meet its ambitions, developers, landowners, service providers, stakeholders and the local authorities all need to align and work together for the benefit of the local community to truly deliver the growth aspirations and sustainable development as required by the Government.

### 3. STRATEGIC POLICIES

- 3.1 The consultation document presents a series of policies covering a variety of aspects under the heading Strategic Policies. Within this part of our representations, we have sought to review the relevant policies and made comments on these which are set out in plan order.

#### **Policy ST1: Health and Wellbeing**

- 3.2 Policy ST1 is an ambitious policy which sets out the Councils approach to have a positive and significant influence on the health and wellbeing of communities across Colchester.
- 3.3 Alongside the commitment to work with partners and health providers to ensure healthier and active lifestyles across Colchester, the policy also details requirements for the preparation of Health Impact Assessments to accompany proposals for residential development.
- 3.4 Policy ST1 outlines that a Health Impact Assessment is required for developments of 50 or more dwellings which is a significant change from the adopted Policy DM1 which requires such assessment on developments of 100 or more dwellings.
- 3.5 The consultation document is unclear as to why the threshold has been reduced and fails to justify this change. Without clear justification, we are concerned that the Policy adds additional and unreasonable burden on developments which are promoting a lower quantum of units.

#### **Policy ST3: Spatial Strategy**

- 3.6 Colchester City Council has outlined in Policy ST3 that “Growth is directed across Colchester starting with the most sustainable and accessible locations” and this approach is supported by Hopkins Homes as it will deliver sustainable development over the lifetime of the plan.
- 3.7 Policy ST3 is accompanied by a Settlement Hierarchy which provides the various categories of settlements across the plan area. Abberton and Langenhoe is identified as a Medium Settlement, and we broadly agree with this classification and confirm that the settlement is a sustainable location and capable of accommodating future growth.
- 3.8 Policy ST3 outlines that the plan period is to 2041, but we are concerned that this is not a long enough time horizon as it does not align with the NPPF requirement for a minimum of 15 years from plan adoption.
- 3.9 As outlined within the Council’s Local Development Scheme (March 2025), the Local Plan is anticipated to be adopted in Spring 2027. Should those project milestones be met, the Council will only have a minimum of 14-year period on which the newly adopted Local Plan will cover.
- 3.10 To ensure that the emerging Local Plan covers the appropriate period and that the Council is capable of significantly boosting housing land supply, the plan period should be extended ahead of the Regulation 19 stage. Extending the plan period to post 2041 will ensure that the Council has a minimum of 15 years plan period post adoption to meet Government requirements and for the plan to be found “sound”.

**Policy ST5: Colchester's Housing Needs**

- 3.11 Policy ST5 sets out the Council's target for the number of dwellings to be provided for within the plan. The annual requirement of 1,300 dwellings per year equates to a total of 20,800 over the plan of 16 years which is in accordance with the Government's Standard Methodology for calculating housing need.
- 3.12 Table ST5.1 outlines that the plan is expecting to deliver 21,106 new dwellings which is clearly an increase from the minimum requirement.
- 3.13 It is positive to see that the Council is seeking to deliver more than the minimum requirement as calculated by the Standard Method, but we are concerned that the over supply identified is very minimal and does not allow for flexibility over the plan period.
- 3.14 The Council has a long and established record of tracking housing delivery across Colchester and is aware that some sites do not come forward as expected or in the time frame anticipated. As such it is surprising to see that the Council has taken the approach in Policy ST5 which in our view will limit future development and fails to significantly boost housing land supply over the longer term.
- 3.15 Table ST5.1 includes a windfall allowance of 2,200 new homes over the plan period. The windfall allowance informed by the Council monitoring evidence is not guaranteed and with only a limited over supply (21,106 compared to 20,800) being planned for, we are concerned that Policy ST5 will not deliver the quantum of housing required to meet local needs.
- 3.16 In response to the Preferred Options consultation, and in recognising the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes (para.61, NPPF) we encourage the Council to identify additional sites and development opportunities which will ensure that the minimum number of dwellings required (as set by the Standard Method) is capable of being achieved over the plan period.

**Policy ST7: Infrastructure Delivery and Impact Mitigation**

- 3.17 Delivering infrastructure alongside residential development enables communities to thrive and be sustainable over the long term. Future development can provide or make contributions to the provision of infrastructure but this needs to be reasonable and appropriate to the scale of growth proposed.
- 3.18 The approach in the Local Plan to link the provision and implementation of infrastructure alongside residential development will ensure that sustainable development is achieved and that additional capacity and/or mitigation measures are provided in conjunction with service providers
- 3.19 During the preparation of the Preferred Options document, it is understood that the Council has been engaging with service providers to identify the infrastructure needs over the plan period. The Local Plan includes site specific requirements as part of the site allocations and it is essential that the infrastructure needs are understood to provide certainty to developers, service providers and the local community for when sites come forward.

- 3.20 The role of service providers is key to ensure that the infrastructure can come forward at the right time in the right place and the Local Plan acknowledges the partnership approach required to deliver the needed infrastructure.

#### **Policy ST8: Place Shaping Principles**

- 3.21 Encouraging high quality standards of design is a key factor in delivering sustainable development across Colchester.
- 3.22 The use of frameworks, masterplans, design codes or other design related guidance is welcomed by Hopkins Homes and we recognise the role that these can play in enabling healthy and thriving communities to be created through high quality developments.
- 3.23 It is however of concern that Policy ST8 contains a wide variety of criterion which individually are understood and accepted but it is unclear how they will operate as a whole and in conjunction with other policies in the plan along with national policy requirements.
- 3.24 Policy ST8 in part is considered to repeat national policy and as outlined by the Council is an alternative to the National Design Guide which in our view is not justified or effective.
- 3.25 The preference for seeking to generate high standards of design and how this can support the delivery of sustainable communities and places is welcomed but as currently presented it is unclear how Policy ST8 will work in practice and how effective it will be for decision makers and applicants.

#### **Policy EN2: Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Environmental Net Gain**

- 3.26 Policy EN2 details the requirements in relation to BNG across Colchester. The requirement for a minimum of 10% BNG and to maximise the delivery of this onsite is in broad accordance with statutory national requirements.
- 3.27 The Council have identified a number of BNG sites in Colchester where BNG provision could be made if not achievable onsite (as the preference). The opportunity to use units at these sites is welcomed and provides greater scope and potential across Colchester.

#### **Policy EN3: Biodiversity and Geodiversity**

- 3.28 Policy EN3 focuses on the ecological information which the Council requires in support of development proposals. Hopkins Homes always engages with specialist ecologists to ensure that the necessary surveys and assessments are undertaken at the appropriate times and will incorporate mitigation measures and enhancement measures as required.
- 3.29 We agree with the need to provide relevant information and detail in relation to ecology but suggest that Policy EN3 takes into account the time scales for determining applications and how that can interact with the necessary survey windows and times for assessments throughout the year.
- 3.30 Policy EN3 identifies that external expertise may be required to review and validate ecological survey reports but does not reference the time implications of this and the impact that may have a decision making. Delays in the reviewing and validation stages can have a detrimental impact on the timetable for determination of proposals which then causes further

delays to the delivery of residential development across the plan area. Policy EN3 should be amended to reflect that the need for external expertise would not be a cause for unnecessary delay.

#### **Policy EN8: Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)**

- 3.31 Policy EN8 seeks to direct development away from land at risk from flooding in line with national requirements. It also requires that Sustainable Drainage Strategies are to be prepared in a meaningful manner to support development proposals. Hopkins Homes agree that development should mitigate and adapt to flood risk.
- 3.32 Taking a nature-based solution and designing Sustainable Drainage Systems to seek to ensure that the area is multifunctional is positive and ensures that development proposals make efficient use of land. Hopkins Homes has a strong track record of incorporating water management measures into developments and using permeable paving, grey and rain water reuse systems for the lifetime of the site broadly in line with Policy EN8.
- 3.33 It is welcomed that Policy EN8 provides for a variety of different measures and will enable developments to take a site specific and case by case approach to water management on the site(s).

#### **Policy GN1: Open Space and Green Network and Waterways Principles**

- 3.34 Providing green and open spaces within residential developments is a key factor in delivering healthy and thriving communities. It encourages active lifestyles for residents and also provides locations for play, recreation, and amenity, whilst also having an ecological value. Hopkins Homes is always looking for ways to incorporate spaces such as these within sites as this provides balance and is an efficient use of land.
- 3.35 We are concerned however that the requirements of GN1 are too prescriptive and do not allow for a design and layout which responds positively to the local character and surroundings.
- 3.36 It is also unclear as to why the minimum 10% gross site area requirement, which appears to be an arbitrary figure for multifunctional open space, has been selected as there is no justification or rationale for the approach provided within the consultation document.
- 3.37 A Local Plan policy which includes such a blanket approach fails to recognise that every site is unique. Some sites are well connected and adjacent to existing areas of open space in which case it may be efficient and justified to have a lower level of onsite provision. Other areas may be limited and therefore require a higher level of onsite provision – the policy as currently written fails to provide this flexibility and would lead to layouts and proposals being stifled by onerous and unjustified policy requirements.
- 3.38 Policy GN1 should provide the flexibility for applicants (and decision makers) to respond to the local character and context of the development site. Without the policy being amended to provide added flexibility it is not justified and will not be effective.

**Policy GN4: Tree Canopy Cover**

- 3.39 The positive contribution that trees make to both the environment but also the design of communities and developments is acknowledged by Hopkins Homes.
- 3.40 Street trees and other canopy ensures that developments are attractive and deliver environmentally sensitive sites that make a significant contribution to sustainable development.
- 3.41 As currently written Policy GN4 seeks to increase the level of canopy cover across Colchester in a similar manner to the current adopted Local Plan and we broadly support the retention of this policy in the emerging Local Plan.
- 3.42 However, Policy GN4 is prescriptive and offers limited flexibility if the increase in canopy can not be achieved on site. It is noted that provision off site can be secured but the Policy limits this to a case-by-case basis and discussions with the case officer. This approach fails to provide certainty for proposals and is it difficult to understand how the desire to increase canopy cover aligns with other competing policy requirements in the Local Plan.

**Policy NZ1: Net Zero Carbon Development (in operation)**

- 3.43 Hopkins Homes are committed to developing homes that provide a range of technologies and features to reduce emissions and environmental impact for residents. All new dwellings constructed by Hopkins Homes utilise a variety of features such as air source heat pumps, high levels of insulation and green tech to deliver energy efficient homes.
- 3.44 The market is ever changing, and Hopkins Homes is able to respond positively and proactively to the needs and demands of the market and introduce new technologies in line with changing Building Regulations.
- 3.45 Policy NZ1 could be overtaken by Building Regulations and other market requirements over the plan period, as it is overly prescriptive and applies a blanket approach to future development in Colchester which could be detrimental to the overall housing delivery anticipated in the Local Plan.
- 3.46 Hopkins Homes welcome and support the Council's commitment to work towards net-zero but we are concerned that Policy NZ1 could become out of date as current national guidance and policy evolves. Policy NZ1 should be re-written to allow greater flexibility and adherence to the Building Regulations (and market requirements) at the time of the development.

**Policy NZ3: Wastewater and Water Supply**

- 3.47 Policy NZ3 outlines that the Council, water companies and the Environment Agency are working together to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the water supply and wastewater networks to serve new developments.
- 3.48 The purpose of the Local Plan is to provide certainty to service providers, the local community and the development industry, but it is concerning that Policy NZ3 requires the applicant to demonstrate there is capacity at the relevant Water Recycling Centres.

- 3.49 It is understood that water companies have a statutory duty to provide the necessary connections to future development, yet the Policy can be used to restrict development coming forward where there is a lack of capacity.
- 3.50 The Local Plan should be outlining the areas for future growth and in conjunction with service providers ensuring this can be accommodated with any necessary improvements coming forward in a timely manner to avoid delays to delivery across Colchester.

### **Policy H1: Housing Mix**

- 3.51 A range and variety of dwelling types and sizes delivers sustainable communities and ensures that all needs are met over the plan period.
- 3.52 Policy H1 is informed by the Colchester Local Housing Needs Assessment that the Council has prepared as part of the Local Plan preparation. The consultation document in paragraph 8.8 acknowledges that evidence is continually updated and that more up to date evidence can come forward over the plan period to support a planning application on a case-by-case basis. The evidence on which the Council is basing their mix identified in Policy H1 was published in September 2024 and we are concerned that by the point of (anticipated) Local Plan adoption in Spring 2027 as detailed in the Colchester Local Development Scheme (March 2025), the evidence will be some years old.
- 3.53 The Government is clear that Local Plans need to be prepared and based on up-to-date evidence. The Colchester Local Housing Needs Assessment is dated September 2024 and at the point of adoption (anticipated Spring 2027) will be nearly three years old and we question whether this is a sound basis on which to set out policy requirements.
- 3.54 Policy H1 should be amended to allow for greater flexibility and allow applicants to consider the mix of units on a development site based on up-to-date evidence. Policy H1 should be used as the starting point to provide certainty for applicants but we are concerned it will be used in a strict manner by decision makers and provide reasons for refusal that would be based on evidence which is “not” up to date.
- 3.55 The Whole Plan Viability Assessment prepared by Newmark on behalf of the Council and published alongside the consultation document identifies that the mix detailed in Policy H1 has a direct impact on viability and can impact the Gross Development Value of a site. The Council (and their consultants) will need to be justified in their approach to mix as the plan evolves but also allow for flexibility as needs evolve over the plan period.

### **Policy H2: Affordable Housing**

- 3.56 The need for affordable housing as part of other residential development is well established and understood by Hopkins Homes. The provision of affordable housing ensures that the necessary accommodation can be provided to meet local needs and helps to deliver sustainable and mixed communities for all.
- 3.57 In a similar manner to the current adopted Policy DM8, we welcome the flexibility within the policy that allows for the level of affordable provision to be judged based on viability

considerations on a case-by-case basis. It is essential that the Local Plan maintains the flexible approach to the provision of affordable housing over the plan period.

#### **Policy PC2: Active and Sustainable Travel**

- 3.58 Active and Sustainable Travel opportunities makes a significant contribution to achieving sustainable development across Colchester. Policy PC2 prioritises walking and cycling opportunities and links to public transport connections.
- 3.59 Hopkins Homes recognises the importance of active and sustainable travel and the role that new development can have in supporting existing and proposed public transport services and how residents can benefit from these.
- 3.60 Future development and growth opportunities however can only be expected to provide what is reasonable (and directly related to that developments impact) for the level of development proposed at each site. As a result of this, we are concerned that elements of PC2 such as criteria (g) go beyond this expectation. Policy PC2(g) requires that proposals should facilitate access to high quality public transport but the Local Plan as written fails to define what is meant by “high quality”. Further iterations of the policy and supporting text will need to provide clarity as to expectations to aid applicants and decision makers.
- 3.61 Public transport connections are varied across the plan area, yet locations such as Abberton have regular services connecting the settlement to locations such as West Mersea and Colchester City Centre (such as Osborne Street, railway stations and Colchester Hospital). As such public transport connections exist and can be supported through further growth in Abberton.
- 3.62 Policy PC2 also details that Transport Assessments and Travel Plans will be required for “all developments that generate significant amounts of movement”. The need for such evidence to support development proposals is understood but Policy PC2 fails to provide certainty as to what ‘significant amounts’ constitutes and subsequently when assessments and additional information will be required.
- 3.63 Policy PC2 also refers to guidance published by Essex County Council, but we are concerned that this approach is not justified. Guidance prepared by the County Council is done so outside of the Local Plan process and could change over the plan period without the same rigour and assessment as other policies in the Local Plan.
- 3.64 The Government is clear that Local Plan policies should provide certainty for all and that applicants can find all the relevant information within the plan and its supporting evidence base. Policy PC2 as currently written fails to do this and the Council needs to reconsider their approach and include the circumstances under which a Transport Statement and Travel Plan are required within their Local Plan and not defer to guidance which is prepared outside of the Local Plan making process.

#### **Policy PC4: Development Density**

- 3.65 The need to make efficient use of land and deliver developments at densities appropriate to the surrounding character and context of a site is supported by Hopkins Homes. Developing

sites with appropriate densities is crucial to helping the Council deliver the level of housing required to meet local needs and doing this in a manner which makes efficient use of land can contribute to sustainable development.

- 3.66 The Council will however need to confirm how Policy PC4 can make efficient use of land when it is considered against other policies that dictate certain provision and land take up, such as Policy GN1 which requires a minimum of 10% gross site area for multifunctional open space, tree canopy requirements, BNG and other considerations such as drainage.
- 3.67 Policy PC4 needs to be clear as to the weight to be given to density alongside other requirements and policy expectations detailed within the Local Plan Preferred Options.

#### **Policy PC6: Design and Amenity**

- 3.68 Policy PC6 details a range of 18 criteria (labelled as a-r) and as currently written requires that all criteria of the policy are met.
- 3.69 In our view this range is too rigid and prescriptive and fails to provide clear guidance to applicants and decision makers and instead offers opportunity for internal conflict between the requirements.
- 3.70 Hopkins Homes recognises the need to deliver developments which have a high standard of design and amenity spaces and is a key objective on all sites. Encouraging high standards of design encourages healthy and thriving communities and installs a strong sense of place for new developments which complement the surrounding locations to deliver sustainable development.
- 3.71 As currently written the extensive range of criteria in Policy PC6 is too rigid and should be amended to allow flexibility in approach and guidance as to how the Council will consider each of these in a balanced and consistent manner.

#### **Policy PC7: Residential Schemes on Greenfield Sites**

- 3.72 It is acknowledged that the design and layout of a development site is a key consideration and through the planning application preparation and consideration, Hopkins Homes take great pride in ensuring that high quality proposals are submitted to deliver sustainable development.
- 3.73 Policy PC7 is a criteria-based policy which includes an extensive list of requirements that sites “must” comply with to be permitted.
- 3.74 The list of criteria is extensive, and the approach put forward in the consultation document is too rigid and therefore not effective or justified. For example, in respect of the primary public open space PC7(a) requires open space to be located centrally within the site. This fails to take account of the surrounding context or the ability for a layout to respond to the individual site character.
- 3.75 Development proposals should have the flexibility to respond positively to the surrounding area and context of the site and not be forced into artificial layouts which focus on meeting the policy requirements.

- 3.76 Policy PC7 should provide opportunities for a flexible and place-based response to be achieved without artificially limiting and stifling opportunity that development may bring. As currently written applicants will need to focus on meeting policy requirements as opposed to developing a site which responds positively and appropriately to the surrounding area. The policy is too prescriptive and will result in layouts that do not meaningfully respond to the local character.
- 3.77 Reference is also made to the Council looking to guidance that is adopted outside of the Local Plan process. PC7(i) references back-to-back distances and how these are to comply with adopted guidance, yet the Local Plan fails to confirm these specific requirements.
- 3.78 For the policy to be effective it will need to be amended to provide greater flexibility for proposals to respond to the surrounding context as opposed to being strictly controlled by policy requirements. The Council also needs to consider how this rigid policy is implemented alongside other policies that dictate site specific requirements and expectations as in our view they will lead to conflict and contradiction between policies and fail in their intention to deliver sustainable development.

#### **Policy PC8: Private Amenity Space**

- 3.79 Having the appropriate private amenity space on all developments is key to the health and wellbeing of residents and when provided has a positive impact on the community and encourages active and health lifestyles.
- 3.80 Hopkins Homes understand the importance of ensuring that development have the appropriate level of amenity space and how different sizes and types of dwellings may have different needs. In that respect the specific requirements in Policy PC8 are positive as it clearly outlines the Council expectations for development proposals.
- 3.81 We are however concerned that in a similar way to other policies in the consultation document the range of site-specific requirements is extensive and when considered alongside policies such as density, parking, open space, canopy cover and drainage requirements the demand on each site are extensive.
- 3.82 The Council needs to be clear as to which elements are fixed and which requirements are flexible in order to ensure that proposals can make efficient use of land over the plan period.

## 4. LAND AT MERSEA ROAD, ABBERTON

- 4.1 On behalf of Hopkins Homes, we are delighted to promote the parcels of land at Mersea Road, Abberton for consideration by the Council for an allocation of at least 70 new homes.
- 4.2 The submission of opportunities and constraints plans for Parcel A and Parcel B provides the opportunity to consider how an allocation in the emerging Local Plan could form part of a longer term design vision for the northern gateway to Abberton. This creates the possibility for forward planning for future housing needs to come forward in a phased manner at an appropriate and sustainable rate of growth for Abberton over the plan period and beyond 2041.
- 4.3 Opportunities and constraints plans for Parcel A and Parcel B are provided in Appendix 1 of the representations.
- 4.4 Abberton is identified by the Council as a sustainable settlement and is a Medium Settlement as outlined in the Settlement Hierarchy. The emerging Local Plan also includes a preferred allocation (Policy PP25, View Park, Abberton and Langenhoe) for a development of approximately 50 dwellings which confirms that the Council consider it a suitable location for future development.
- 4.5 Parcel A (5.5ha in size) and Parcel B (4.1ha in size) have not been promoted to the local authority in earlier rounds of the Local Plan, but under option from the landowner, Hopkins Homes is now able to make the sites readily available for consideration. Making the sites available at this stage, provides an opportunity for the Council to consider allocating a site or a phased delivery of sites in a sustainable location which meets the outlined vision and objectives of the Local Plan and the NPPF.
- 4.6 Abberton has a range of services and facilities including Primary School, Village Hall, Open Space, Cricket Club, Allotments and a Community Shop.
- 4.7 Satisfactory access to both parcels can be provided from Mersea Road and this will also provide an opportunity to enhance the gateway and sense of arrival to Abberton. Mersea Road is served by regular public transport services which connects Colchester with Mersea Island and communities between.
- 4.8 As existing greenfield sites, there is potential to deliver a masterplan led development which comprises a mixture of residential dwellings, together with open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure in a sustainable manner. Development on the parcels can come forward in a phased manner to meet the current and longer term housing needs of the area. Through a masterplan approach the delivery of the dwellings and associated infrastructure can be managed and secured to achieve sustainable development over this plan period and future plans.
- 4.9 Identifying additional land in Abberton which is a sustainable location can ensure that the Council significantly boosts housing land supply and contributes to much needed housing delivery across the local authority area.

- 4.10 Colchester City Council has prepared a Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) and implemented a methodology to inform site selection considerations as part of the activity to prepare their emerging Local Plan. The methodology forms part of the evidence base supporting the Preferred Options and is dated December 2023. The introduction to the methodology is clear that the SLAA process helps to inform future decisions regarding the allocation of land but it is not the sole evidence for informing which sites should be allocated for development.
- 4.11 Parcel A and Parcel B has not been submitted to the Council previously so therefore have not been assessed through the methodology. As part of these representations, we have undertaken an assessment following the same methodology to show the suitability of the sites. A copy of the assessments can be found in Appendix 2.
- 4.12 Within the assessments, further commentary on the site and location have been provided to justify the RAG rating given against each assessment criterion. Overall the assessments show that Parcel A and Parcel B perform positively when judged against the Council methodology.
- 4.13 Parcel A is 5.5ha and Parcel B is 4.1ha and together they are capable of providing future residential growth and development to meet the needs of Abberton. Parcel A has the potential to deliver up to c.125 homes and Parcel B up to c.95 homes and provide the opportunity to come forward in two or three phases along with associated on-site infrastructure and financial contributions to support related local needs.
- 4.14 The parcels are available and deliverable within the short term and would be developed by Hopkins Homes who have a proven track record of house building in Colchester and the East of England.
- 4.15 Hopkins Homes are open to working with the Council to develop a site-specific allocation for the site so that it can be incorporated into the Regulation 19 document and become part of the housing delivery for the area.
- 4.16 In accordance with the site promotion a draft policy is provided in the table below for consideration.

Policy PPxx: Mersea Road, Abberton and Langenhoe.

In addition to the infrastructure and mitigation requirements identified in Policy ST7 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:

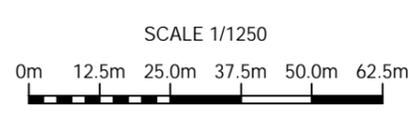
- a) Approximately 70 new dwellings of a mix and type of housing to meet evidence needs and be compatible with surrounding development;
- b) Safe and suitable site access to required highway design standards and point of vehicle access off Mersea Road to be agreed with the Highway Authority and demonstration that the proposal would not be detrimental to highway capacity or safety.

- c) Provide a 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.
- d) Creation of a gateway feature to recognise the location of the site at the entrance to the settlement and connections to Mersea Road.
- e) Mature trees and hedgerows within the site should be retained.
- f) 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 landscapes to reflect and reinforce rural character.
- g) Development must conserve, and where appropriate enhance the significance of heritage assets close to the allocated site.
- h) A range of measures in addition to prioritising SuDs (Policy EN8) and water efficiency measures to reduce the risk on impact on the WRC capacity as a result of planning growth including: i) Removal of unrequired network flows, ii) Targeted education to include new residents of the development, iii) Reduction in the demand for potable water.

## **APPENDIX 1. OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS PLANS**

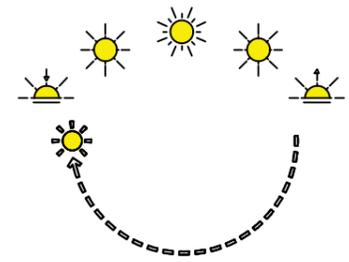


- Key**
- Site Boundary
  - Developable Area
  - Village Entrance Feature
  - \* Key Marker Buildings
  - Local Equipped Area of Play
  - Primary Access
  - Potential Highway Improvements
  - Main access routes
  - Proposed Off-site Public Footpath
  - ↘ Direction of Fall in Levels
  - Potential ecology corridor and connectivity between public open space
  - Existing trees
  - Existing hedgerows



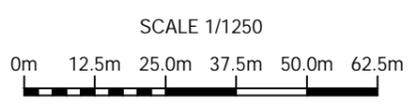
e. info@lucid-uda.co.uk t. 01473 901688

Client:	Untypical		
Project:	Land East of Mersea Road - Parcel A, Abberton, Essex		
Drawing:	Opportunities and Constraints Plan		
Date:	January 26	Scale:	1:1250 at A3
Job No:	26-1207	Drwg No:	1



Existing hedgerow to be retained where possible and replanted where necessary.

Key	
	Site Boundary
	Developable Area
	Village Entrance Feature
	Key Marker Buildings
	Local Equipped Area of Play
	Primary Access Potential Highway Improvements
	Main access routes
	Proposed Off-site Public Footpath
	Direction of Fall in Levels
	Potential ecology corridor and connectivity between public open space
	Existing trees
	Existing hedgerows



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Client:	Untypical		
Project:	Land West of Mersea Road - Parcel B, Abberton, Essex		
Drawing:	Opportunities and Constraints Plan		
Date:	January 26	Scale:	1:1250 at A3
Job No:	26-1207	Drwg No:	2

## **APPENDIX 2. SITE ASSESSMENTS**

## **Assessment of Parcel A using the Colchester City Council SLAA Methodology.**

**Site area (hectares)** 5.5ha

**Site Name** Land East of Mersea Road, Abberton (Parcel A)

**Proposed Use/s** 1. Housing

### **Section 1: Suitability**

#### **Physical Constraints**

**Is the site within or adjacent to the existing settlement boundary?** Amber – adjacent to or within close proximity an existing settlement boundary

**Would development of the site lead to coalescence between settlements?** Green – no contribution to coalescence

**What is the main access point/s to the site? Is the access safe and suitable? Are there any highway constraints?** Amber – some constraints identified but not significant enough to affect the site's deliverability.

Hopkins Homes' engineer has confirmed vehicular access can be achieved from Mersea Road with compliant visibility splays. The offset between the proposed access to Parcel A and the proposed access to Parcel B is in excess of the minimum distance required by ECC. There is sufficient highways land and verge along Mersea Road to deliver a footway from the proposed site access to the existing footway 150m to the south providing pedestrian connectivity to the settlement centre.

Hopkins Homes's commercial team has confirmed the cost of delivering the footway is financially viable.

A topographical survey is being undertaken to provide evidence of deliverability of the detailed design of the access and footway.

**Is there any evidence that it would not be possible to deliver the necessary utilities?** Green – no known issues with utility provision

**Are there any issues that would prevent/limit the developable area of the site? e.g. topography/levels, pylons, canopy cover** Green – no known site specific issues or evidence has been provided which demonstrates that site constraints cannot be adequately addressed

The site is flat with a slight fall from the south to the north boundary.

There is an area of made ground along the frontage of Mersea Road. Hopkins Homes' engineer has confirmed the site access with a capping layer/membrane can be delivered across the made ground.

The soils are clay so drainage attenuation would be required which provides the potential to locate the attenuation basin with a lining in the area of made ground. A planning application would be supported by evidence of intrusive investigations and details of basin design. Alternatively, the site's topography will allow the basin to be located to the north of the site outside of the area of made ground.

The LEAP with a lined ground barrier can be located in the area of made ground.

Hopkins Homes' commercial team has confirmed the cost of delivering the access, attenuation basin and LEAP with the necessary mitigation measures would be financially viable.

**Is the site brownfield or greenfield?** Red – greenfield (approx. 75% plus)

**What is the agricultural land classification?** Red – Grades 1, 2 and/or 3a (50% or more)

**Impact of neighbouring uses (e.g. noise, smell, amenity) – would development be likely to be negatively impacted by, or cause negative impact on, neighbouring areas?** Green – there are no neighbouring use issues

**Is the site partially located within any of the following designations? Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ancient Woodlands, RAMSAR** Green – site is not located within any designations listed.

**Is the site located within any of the following local designations? Local Wildlife Site (LoWS), Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Coastal Protection Belt** Green – site is not located within any designations listed.

Parcel A and Parcel B are the only deliverable sites in Abberton located outside of the Coastal Protection Area.

**Could development of the site enhance or create green infrastructure e.g Open Space, Park, Sport and/or recreation grounds, Country Park, Allotments?** Green – yes, there are opportunities to enhance or create green infrastructure.

The submitted plans identify opportunities to provide substantial new areas of publicly assessable open space and walking routes including potential connection to the existing public right of way network to the north of Abberton across land in the same ownership as the proposed allocation site.

The plans also identify opportunities to improve ecological connectivity to the north of Abberton.

The delivery of other types of green infrastructure can be discussed further in drafting the allocation policy depending upon local needs.

**Would development of the site be likely to cause harm to any archaeological or heritage assets or their setting? Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 2\* Listed Building, Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas, Locally Listed Heritage Asset, archaeological assets** Green – no potential harm.

**Would development of the site result in the loss of, or partial loss of, public open space, a Public Right of Way (PRoW), or a bridleway?** Green – development would not result in the loss of public open space, public right of way or a bridleway.

As above, the site provides the potential opportunity to create a new connection to the existing public right of way network to the north of Abberton across land in the same land ownership as the proposed allocation site.

**What flood zone is the site located in?** Green – Site is wholly located in Flood Zone 1

**Is the site within a Critical Drainage Area?** Green – site is not located within a Critical Drainage Area

The site has minimal surface water flood areas along the ditch on the eastern boundary and located outside of the areas of potential developable area identified on the submitted opportunities and constraints plan.

### **Access to Key Services**

**Distance to primary schools?** Amber – Site is within 401 and 800m of a primary school

**Distance to secondary school?** Red – Site is in excess of 2km of a secondary school

All sites in Abberton are over 2km from the nearest secondary school, Thomas Lord Audley School in Colchester. As the site is to the north of Abberton it is closer to the secondary school than all other potential allocation sites in Abberton.

**Distance to supermarkets/convenience stores?** Green – Site is within 800m of a supermarket/convenience store

The site is c.300m from the community shop on the junction of Mersea Road and Fingringhoe Road

**Distance to GP surgeries?** Red – Site is in excess of 2km of GP surgeries

### **Section 2: Availability**

**Has the site been submitted for development through the Call for Sites for the Local Plan Review?** Red – Site has never been submitted for development.

**What is the site ownership situation?** Green – Single ownership.

**Is the land owner open to working in partnership and bringing the site forward in combination with others to enable a comprehensive approach to development?** Green – Yes, the land owner is willing to work in partnership to bring the site forward in combination with others.

**Is the site currently in use and is it likely to continue to be used for the foreseeable future / would that use prevent development on the site from coming forward?** Green – site is vacant or its current use can cease at short notice.

**Does the site have a history of unimplemented permissions?** Green – No unimplemented permissions.

### **Section 3: Achievability (including viability)**

**Is development of the site in line with existing policies requiring a contribution, i.e., affordable housing, is development of the site economically viable? Are there any factors which could limit its viability?** Multiple Choice and Text comment box Red – development is likely unviable. Amber – development is marginal. Green – development is likely viable. Green – development is likely viable.

Hopkins Homes' commercial team has confirmed the delivery of a policy compliant development site is likely financially viable.

**Does the development of, or access to, the site rely on another piece of land, and has that land been put forward for development?** Green – the site does not rely on another piece of land.

**Is the site within a Minerals Safeguarding Area and/or Minerals and Waste Consultation Area?** Green – Not within a Minerals Safeguarding Area, Minerals Consultation Area or Waste Consultation Area

**Is the land currently protected for an alternative use within the Colchester Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan?** Green – the site is not protected for any alternative use.

**Is the site contaminated or partially contaminated?** Amber – there is possibility of contamination, but it can be remediated without affecting development viability.

There is an area of made ground along the site frontage of Mersea Road. Hopkins Homes' engineer has confirmed the site access, LEAP and potentially the attenuation basin can be located in the area with mitigation as detailed above.

ENDS

## **Assessment of Parcel B using the Colchester City Council SLAA Methodology.**

**Site area (hectares)** 4.1ha

**Site Name** Land West of Mersea Road, Abberton (Parcel B)

**Proposed Use/s** 1. Housing

### **Section 1: Suitability**

#### **Physical Constraints**

**Is the site within or adjacent to the existing settlement boundary?** Amber – adjacent to or within close proximity an existing settlement boundary

**Would development of the site lead to coalescence between settlements?** Green – no contribution to coalescence

**What is the main access point/s to the site? Is the access safe and suitable? Are there any highway constraints?** Amber – some constraints identified but not significant enough to affect the site's deliverability.

Hopkins Homes' engineer has confirmed vehicular access can be achieved from Mersea Road with compliant visibility splays. The offset between the proposed access to Parcel A and the proposed access to Parcel B is in excess of the minimum distance required by ECC. There is sufficient highways land and verge along Mersea Road to deliver a crossing to the east side of Mersea Road and footway to the existing footway 150m to the south providing pedestrian connectivity to the settlement centre.

Hopkins Homes's commercial team has confirmed the cost of delivering the footway is financially viable.

A topographical survey is being undertaken to provide evidence of deliverability of the detailed design of the access and footway.

**Is there any evidence that it would not be possible to deliver the necessary utilities?** Green – no known issues with utility provision

**Are there any issues that would prevent/limit the developable area of the site? e.g. topography/levels, pylons, canopy cover** Green – no known site specific issues or evidence has been provided which demonstrates that site constraints cannot be adequately addressed

The site is flat with a slight fall from the south to the north boundary.

**Is the site brownfield or greenfield?** Red – greenfield (approx. 75% plus)

**What is the agricultural land classification?** Red – Grades 1, 2 and/or 3a (50% or more)

**Impact of neighbouring uses (e.g. noise, smell, amenity) – would development be likely to be negatively impacted by, or cause negative impact on, neighbouring areas?** Green – there are no neighbouring use issues

**Is the site partially located within any of the following designations? Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Area of**

**Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ancient Woodlands, RAMSAR** Green – site is not located within any designations listed.

**Is the site located within any of the following local designations? Local Wildlife Site (LoWS), Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Coastal Protection Belt** Green – site is not located within any designations listed.

Parcel A and Parcel B are the only deliverable sites in Abberton located outside of the Coastal Protection Area.

**Could development of the site enhance or create green infrastructure e.g Open Space, Park, Sport and/or recreation grounds, Country Park, Allotments?** Green – yes, there are opportunities to enhance or create green infrastructure.

The submitted plans identify opportunities to provide substantial new areas of publicly assessable open space and walking routes.

The plans also identify opportunities to improve ecological connectivity to the north of Abberton.

The delivery of other types of green infrastructure can be discussed further in drafting the allocation policy depending on local needs.

**Would development of the site be likely to cause harm to any archaeological or heritage assets or their setting? Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 2\* Listed Building, Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), Registered Parks and Gardens, Conservation Areas, Locally Listed Heritage Asset, archaeological assets** Green – no potential harm.

**Would development of the site result in the loss of, or partial loss of, public open space, a Public Right of Way (PRoW), or a bridleway?** Green – development would not result in the loss of public open space, public right of way or a bridleway.

**What flood zone is the site located in?** Green – Site is wholly located in Flood Zone 1

**Is the site within a Critical Drainage Area?** Green – site is not located within a Critical Drainage Area

The site has no areas of surface water flooding.

### **Access to Key Services**

**Distance to primary schools?** Amber – Site is within 401 and 800m of a primary school

**Distance to secondary school?** Red – Site is in excess of 2km of a secondary school

All sites in Abberton are over 2km from the nearest secondary school, Thomas Lord Audley School in Colchester. As the site is to the north of Abberton it is closer to the secondary school than all other potential allocation sites in Abberton.

**Distance to supermarkets/convenience stores?** Green – Site is within 800m of a supermarket/convenience store

The site is c.300m from the community shop on the junction of Mersea Road and Fingringhoe Road

**Distance to GP surgeries?** Red – Site is in excess of 2km of GP surgeries

## **Section 2: Availability**

**Has the site been submitted for development through the Call for Sites for the Local Plan Review?** Red – Site has never been submitted for development.

**What is the site ownership situation?** Green – Single ownership.

**Is the land owner open to working in partnership and bringing the site forward in combination with others to enable a comprehensive approach to development?** Green – Yes, the land owner is willing to work in partnership to bring the site forward in combination with others.

**Is the site currently in use and is it likely to continue to be used for the foreseeable future / would that use prevent development on the site from coming forward?** Green – site is vacant or its current use can cease at short notice.

**Does the site have a history of unimplemented permissions?** Green – No unimplemented permissions.

## **Section 3: Achievability (including viability)**

**Is development of the site in line with existing policies requiring a contribution, i.e., affordable housing, is development of the site economically viable? Are there any factors which could limit its viability?** Multiple Choice and Text comment box Red – development is likely unviable. Amber – development is marginal. Green – development is likely viable. Green – development is likely viable.

Hopkins Homes' commercial team has confirmed the delivery of a policy compliant development site is likely financially viable.

**Does the development of, or access to, the site rely on another piece of land, and has that land been put forward for development?** Green – the site does not rely on another piece of land.

**Is the site within a Minerals Safeguarding Area and/or Minerals and Waste Consultation Area?** Green – Not within a Minerals Safeguarding Area, Minerals Consultation Area or Waste Consultation Area

**Is the land currently protected for an alternative use within the Colchester Local Plan or a Neighbourhood Plan?** Green – the site is not protected for any alternative use.

**Is the site contaminated or partially contaminated?** Green – no contamination issues foreseen.

ENDS

# Boyer



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