

Representation To Colchester City Council Preferred Options Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation (November 2025)

One Station Square
Cambridge
CB1 2GA
T: 01223 368771
F: 01223 346627

Site Address / Reference: Draft Policy PP31: Land North of Halstead Road and East of Wood Lane, Eight Ash Green

Representations on behalf of: Bellway Strategic Land

Date: January 2026

Introduction

Colchester City Council ('the Council') is preparing a new Local Plan and is consulting on its Preferred Options Local Plan ('the draft Plan') in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning Regulations 2012.

The draft Plan provides a strategy for the growth of Colchester up to 2041, setting out what development will take place and where, and policies for the conservation and protection of the environment. Once adopted, the new Local Plan will replace existing local planning policies and will be used to make decisions on planning applications.

This representation has been prepared on behalf of Bellway Strategic Land in broad support of draft Policy PP31: Land North of Halstead Road and East of Wood Lane, Eight Ash Green of the Colchester City Council Preferred Options Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation (November 2025), together with the accompanying draft Policies Map document.

Draft Policy PP31 supports the development of approximately 180 homes on land north of Halstead Road and East of Wood Lane, Eight Ash Green. The site is shaded pink in the corresponding draft Policies Map for Eight Ash Green, as shown in Appendix 1.

Bellway Strategic Land ('Bellway'), with the agreement of the landowner, is promoting and seeking to deliver a significant part of the draft allocation on land outlined in red ('the Site') on the Site Plan shown in Appendix 2.

The Site excludes the tree belt on the northern boundary that is currently shaded pink on the draft Policies Map, on the basis that the tree belt will be retained.

The Site consists of a majority share (87%) of the draft Policy PP31 boundary. The residual parcel of land on the western side of the draft Policy PP31 boundary is within third party ownership. It is physically separated from the Site and can be delivered in its own right. Bellway are supportive of the draft allocation, and are, subject to securing planning permission, ready to deliver residential development on the part of the allocation within our control.

Representations on behalf of Bellway in support of the Site's allocation for new housing were previously made to the Call for Sites consultation in January 2024.

Bellway has commenced pre-application engagement with the Council on the Proposed Development and is in the early stages of preparing a planning application for submission in Spring 2026. If successful, development is anticipated to commence within 6 months of receiving planning permission, and take approximately 3 years to complete 150 dwellings.

Bellway Homes Limited (Essex)

Bellway's overarching ambition is to create attractive and sustainable communities that leave a positive legacy for residents and wider society.

Bellway began as a small family business in 1946 – with a passion for building exceptional quality homes in carefully selected locations, inspired by the needs of real families. To this day, they maintain these same core values, combining their decades of expertise with the level of personalised care that Bellway is known for.

Bellway has been again recognised as a five-star builder by the Home Builders Federation. This award reflects their commitment to delivering exceptional quality as standard to their customers, throughout the construction process, in the homes created, and in their aftercare and customer service.

Bellway has also recently been awarded, for the second time in three years, the prestigious 'Large Housebuilder of the Year 2025' award. This recognition reflects our industry-leading performance, achieving the highest combined scores for 'Build Quality' and 'Service After' among major developers. It also highlights the commitment to sustainability through the 'Better with Bellway' strategy and growth ambitions.

Bellway welcomes the decision by the Council to propose the Site for residential development and look forward to continuing to engage with the Council further in respect of the delivery of the site.

The Site

The Site lies on the northern side of Halstead Road, between Nimrod Cottages and the Eight Ash Green Dental Surgery, within the village of Eight Ash Green. The Site is currently in agricultural use.

The Site's frontage along Halstead Road is served by a footpath with streetlighting on either side of the carriageway, within the public highway. A drainage ditch, inside the Site boundary, lies behind the footpath, with one section supporting a low hedgerow.

The Site's continuous frontage is interrupted by an existing privately-owned, large two storey dwelling ('Alwyn'), that's set within a large residential curtilage. This property has a tall, coniferous hedge, almost fully enclosing the perimeter of the property. This property is excluded from the Site boundary / Proposed Development.

The southern boundary of the Site is predominantly extensive, mature, woodland, serving to create a natural barrier to additional development beyond, and as a vegetated buffer that can help assimilate new development into the Site. Furthermore, the Site's topography falls from the southern boundary (Halstead Road) to this northern boundary, but then begins to rise beyond, creating a slight bowling effect for the Site. This will help to reduce potential landscape and visual impact of new development from longer distant views.

The Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan 2017 – 2033 ('the Neighbourhood Plan'), adopted November 2019, notes that there are four distinct areas of residential housing within the village, namely:

- Spring Lane / Fordham Heath / Heathfields and Searle Way/The Walk and the Rise (medium density);
- Wood Lane and adjacent cul de sacs (low density);
- Fiddlers Folly/Porters Lane and Close (high density); and
- Seven Star Green (low density).

The 2017 physical survey of the village undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Group shows there are some 680 dwellings containing a mixture of housing types of:

- 252 detached houses (37%)
- 129 semi-detached houses (19%)
- 7 semi-detached bungalows (1%)
- 143 terraced houses (21%)
- 122 bungalows (18%)
- 27 flats (4%)

The following services and facilities are found within the village:

- Primary school
- Two dental surgeries
- Bakery and convenience store
- Convenience store
- Public house
- Fish and chip shop
- Petrol station and convenience store
- Hotel and leisure club
- Nursing home
- Childcare / nursery
- Hairdresser
- Village hall
- Church
- Public parks, recreation grounds for cricket and football, and children's play area
- Allotments
- Various bus services, including bus stops in close proximity to the Site (on Halsted Road, close to the junction of Turkey Cock Lane and on Halsted Road, close to the junction with Jubilee Meadow). Routes 88, 88a and 83B provide connections between Eight Ash Green with Colchester and towns such as Halsted.

Additionally, there are a number of services and facilities within 2km of the Site's north-western boundary, including:

- Stane Retail Park (incl. foodstores, garden centre, furniture, outdoor clothing, pet store & vets, pharmacy, takeaways/drive-thru, coffee shop, pub, restaurants)
- Sainsbury's (foodstore, concessions, petrol filling station), pub
- Tollgate Retail Park (incl. discount shop, white goods / electrical, homeware, sportswear, toy store, pharmacy, restaurant/drive-thru)
- Medical Centre

The Site is approximately 3km from a hospital, 4km from a High School, and 5km from Colchester train station.

The village and its surrounding catchment area is therefore well-served by services and facilities that will help to support new homes and their residents.

Constraints and Opportunities Analysis

Appendix 3 provides an extract from the Nimbus Mapping system, showing the Site in the context of known, relevant desktop constraints. All relevant constraints are listed down the left-hand side of the page. This high-level analysis shows there are no known, significant relevant constraints to new residential development here.

Appendices 4, 5 and 6 provide preliminary environmental and technical reports on ecology, landscape/heritage, highways and transport, and flood risk and drainage, respectively. These reports were prepared and submitted to inform the Call for Sites submission in January 2024, but have been re-provided here, for completeness. There are no known technical issues preventing residential development of approximately 150 homes on the Site.

Additional assessment, informed by the Council's local validation list for major residential development, are being undertaken to assess the technical and environmental baselines of various disciplines (e.g. ecology, drainage, heritage, transport, trees and hedges etc), alongside an assessment of potential impacts that the Proposed Development might create, and what mitigation can be applied to minimise / avoid harm.

Relevant Policy of the Draft Local Plan

The primary policy of relevance to the Site and the Proposed Development is Draft Policy **PP31: Land North of Halstead Road and East of Wood Lane, Eight Ash Green**, which states:

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 180 new dwellings of a mix and type of housing to meet evidenced needs and be compatible with surrounding development;*
- 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;*
- 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 and to Tollgate District Centre;*
- d) Biodiversity mitigation must include a buffer to the watercourse and to the adjacent ancient woodland to protect it from recreational and other disturbance;*
- e) Onsite BNG measures should focus on buffering the woodland and providing watercourse enhancements, with other medium distinctiveness habitat (e.g. other neutral grassland);*
- f) Support will be given to delivering grassland habitat within or adjacent to the site to support the delivery of the strategic creation opportunities in the Essex LNRS;*
- 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;*
- 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 two Grade II Listed Buildings as informed by the stage 1 HIA;*
- i) Contributions towards the provision of a new village hall in Eight Ash Green;*
- j) Any site specific infrastructure requirements from the IDP (likely to include education provision, highway mitigation, water and wastewater and specific community / open space provision).*

All development Proposals within Eight Ash Green parish, will also be determined against the policies in the Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan (adopted December 2019) where they are up to date and relevant.

Policy Interpretation and Emerging Design Response from the Proposed Development

This section seeks to explain how the emerging Proposed Development is responding positively to the expectations of draft Policy PP31, helping to provide confidence in suitability, availability and deliverability terms.

Approximately 180 new dwellings of a mix and type of housing to meet evidenced needs and be compatible with surrounding development;

An equitable split between the Site and the additional third-party owned parcel to the west of the Site, would suggest approximately 150 homes for the Site, which Bellway consider is achievable. The policy reference to 180 homes is not a minimum requirement and would need to be ultimately determined by detailed site investigation and analysis.

We would continue to support retaining the use of the terms ‘approximately’ and ‘180 new dwellings’ in the policy wording.

The Proposed Development seeks to achieve 30% affordable housing, and housing mix is being informed by the latest Colchester Local Housing Needs Assessment.

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;

The transport and highways assessment work undertaken in December 2023 noted that from a geometric and visibility perspective, an access can be achieved from Halstead Road (A1124). Consideration has been given to the Essex Design Guide regarding Type of Access, Size, and location with regard to neighbouring junction.

Off-site highway impacts are not likely to be a significant concern, but this is subject to discussions with the local highway authority.

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 and to Tollgate District Centre;

There is an existing Public Right of Way along the eastern edge of the Site that should be considered for connection into a scheme, if feasible / achievable (i.e. accounting for landownership issues). However, from recent fieldwork, there are concerns about the ability to achieve a suitable crossing point over the drain/ditch in terms of landing points that wouldn't interfere with third party private land.

It is considered that the Site is located in a sustainable location, and suitable connections should be provided to the existing bus stop provision in the vicinity of the Site.

Biodiversity mitigation must include a buffer to the watercourse and to the adjacent ancient woodland to protect it from recreational and other disturbance;

A suitable buffer can be incorporated into any residential scheme coming forward.

Onsite BNG measures should focus on buffering the woodland and providing watercourse enhancements, with other medium distinctiveness habitat (e.g. other neutral grassland);

We consider BNG assessment at application stage is the most appropriate stage for establishing habitats and type of enhancements secured, and is unnecessary to include this within the policy.

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

Bellway does not object to exploring the inclusion of grassland habitat on Site as part of development proposals coming forward. However, Bellway is not in control of any other land adjacent to the Site where grassland could be delivered. It would be unreasonable for the policy to require work on third party land and would suggest 'or adjacent to the site' is removed from the policy wording.

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;

We have no issue with this part of the policy. ***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 two Grade II Listed Buildings as informed by the stage 1 HIA;***

It is noted that there are two grade II listed buildings (Bakery Cottage on the southern side of Halstead Road, and Malting House on Seven Star Green), and a detailed Heritage Assessment will be prepared to assess the significance of each, to consider any potential impact that might arise from the Proposed Development, and what mitigation (if any) should be considered.

Notwithstanding this, it is noted that the Malting House lies approximately 330m from Halstead Road and is surrounded by dense vegetation. Bakery Cottage is approximately 100m from the nearest Site boundary but is largely obscured by existing built form in the village. It is therefore considered that Proposed Development is unlikely to result in harm on these two listed buildings.

Contributions towards the provision of a new village hall in Eight Ash Green;

We have concerns about the wording of this element of the draft Policy. It is unclear where a new village hall would be provided, the specifications and budget cost of a new building are unknown, and the timings / mechanism of delivery have not been provided. Contributions are proposed to be shared with another housing allocation in the village (PP32 – for 250 homes), and therefore a proportionate, equitable split would be typically expected, determined by the actual quantum of new dwellings that obtain planning permission. However, it is noted that there is currently a live planning application (ref 251310) for this site, and there is the possibility that s106 contributions will not be obtained for this application if outline planning permission is secured.

In this situation, it would be wholly unreasonable to expect Bellway to cover the full cost of a new village hall, given that the Proposed Development would equate to only 33% of new development in the village (140 of the envisaged 430 homes).

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

We have no issue with the principle of this requirement, but would welcome more detailed information and breakdown on the requirements for each allocation.

Other Draft Policy Comments

Policy H6: Self and Custom Build

It is noted that draft policy H6 will require 2% of homes on sites of 150 or more to be provided as self-build or custom-build plots.

However, it is not clear what evidence there is to support this level of provision. Bellway would respectively suggest that this approach should be reviewed on a site-by-site basis and with guidance from the most up-to-date self-build / custom-build register to determine the preferred locations for serviced plots from those on the waiting list. This would be a more practical solution, ensuring that the needs of those in the Borough are met, without placing a burden on developers (in some cases) from providing plots in unwanted locations.

Conclusion

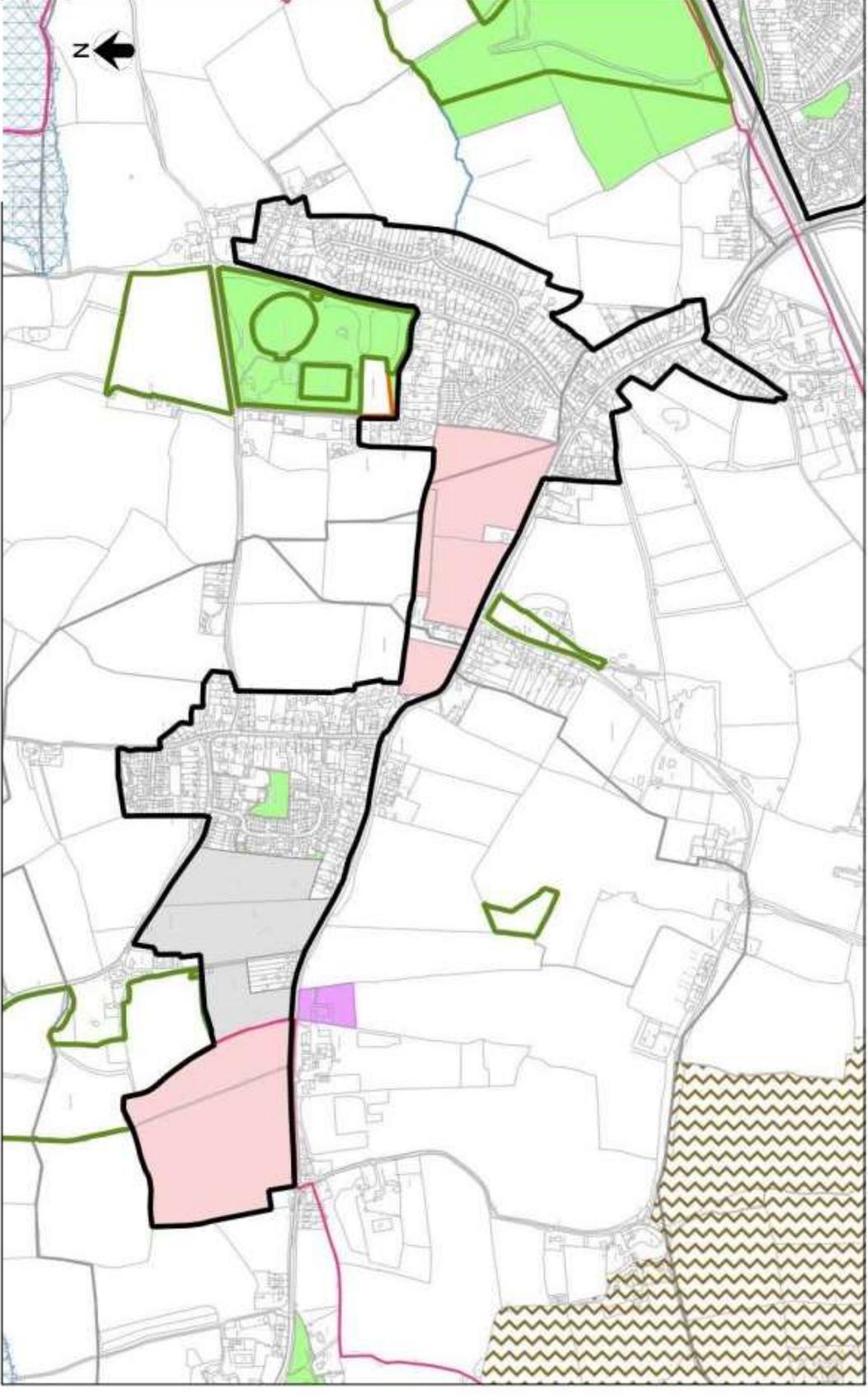
The Site is available, viable and deliverable and bringing it forward would assist in boosting both housing land supply and delivery in Colchester. The proposal would also bring forward some key benefits such as 30% affordable housing, the creation of areas of public open space, 10% Biodiversity net gain, the creation of new jobs during the construction period, and the creation of additional investment into the local economy and support of key services (including potential contributions towards a new hall for the village).

Bellway are supportive of draft Policy PP31 and have an agreement in place with the landowner to bring forward approximately 150 homes on 87% of the allocated land once planning permission is in place.

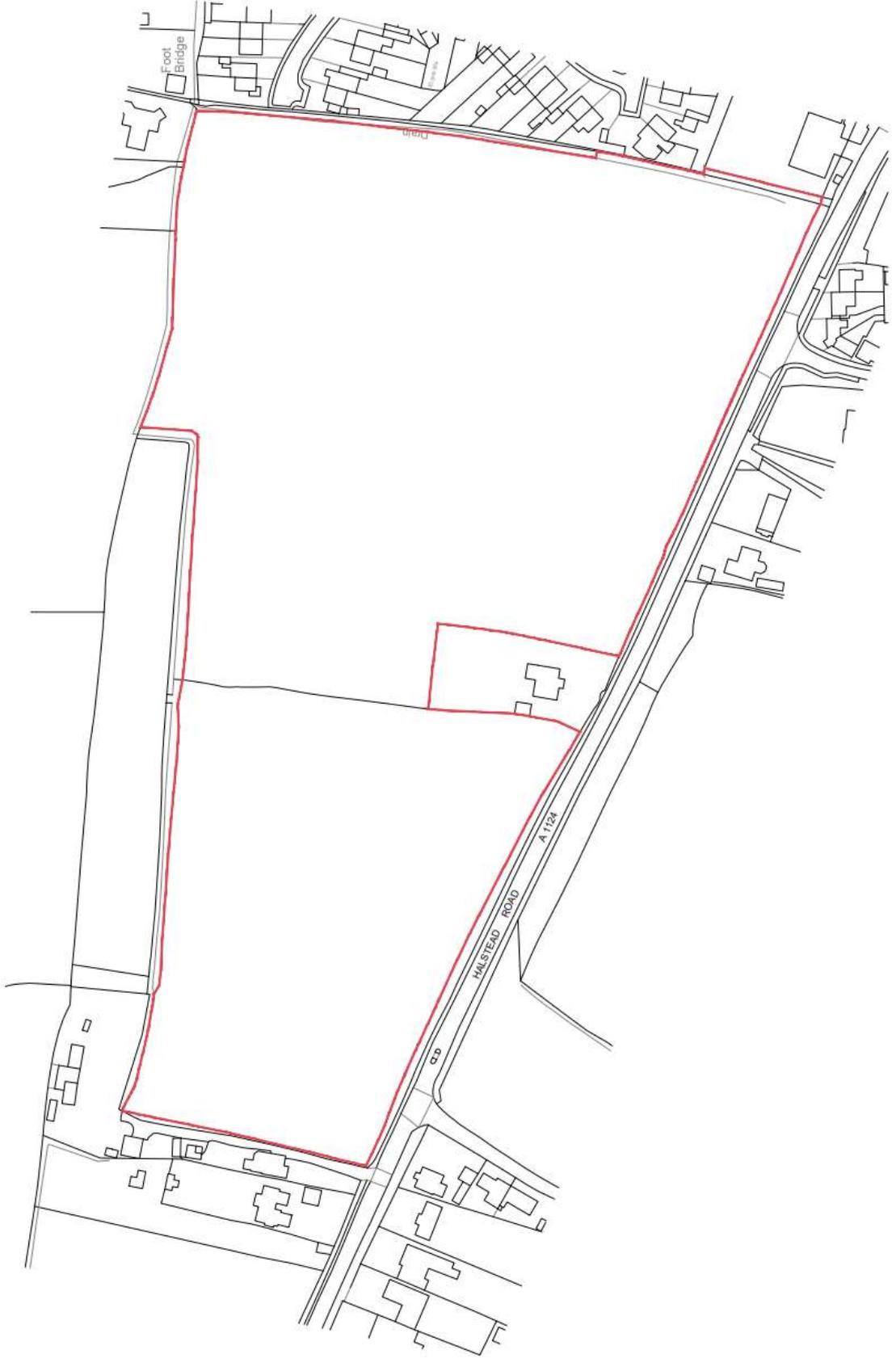
APPENDIX 1: DRAFT PROPOSALS MAP FOR EIGHT ASH GREEN, PREFERRED OPTIONS LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION



EIGHT ASH GREEN



APPENDIX 2: SITE PLAN



APPENDIX 3: CONSTRAINTS ANALYSIS



Carter Jonas

APPENDIX 6: TECHNICAL OVERVIEW REPORT (Transport and Highways, Flood Risk and Drainage), December 2023 (previously submitted for Call for Sites January 2024

