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## Objection Statement to proposed housing land allocation at Land North of Boxted Straight Road, Boxted (PP26).

On behalf of: Boxted Parish Council

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Date: 12/12/2025

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# 1. Summary of objection

Boxted Parish Council objects to the proposed allocation of Land North of Boxted Straight Road, Boxted (PP26) for residential development in the emerging Colchester Local Plan<sup>1</sup>.

In my view, allocation of this site would be:

- Contrary to the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan (BNP) – particularly Policies SB1, LC1 and LC2 and the Plan’s core objective to avoid coalescence with urban Colchester.
- Inconsistent with the adopted Colchester Local Plan Section 2, notably the Boxted place policy (para 6.136–6.138 and Policy SS2), which explicitly identifies development *southwards along Boxted Straight Road* as constrained because of ribbon development and the risk of coalescence.
- In tension with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, Dec 2024 version – “NPPF 2025”), particularly policies on:
  - Protecting the intrinsic character of the countryside and the benefits of best and most versatile agricultural land;
  - Directing development to

Boxted	
Settlement	Boxted
Site Name	Land North Boxted Straight Road
Call for Site reference	10676
Policy number	PP26
Purpose	Residential
Site map	
Description of site	Arable; hedgerows.
Site location (proximity to settlement boundary)	Adjacent to the Adopted Local Plan Settlement Boundary. Within the Preferred Options Settlement Boundary
<b>Summary of evidence</b>	
SLAA Stage 1	Passed to stage 2
SLAA Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No contribution to coalescence</li> <li>• Some constraints identified but not significant enough to affect the site’s deliverability</li> <li>• No known issues with utility provision</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are some site specific issues which could be addressed which would prevent/limit the developable area of the site</li> <li>• Greenfield</li> <li>• Grade 3 Land classification</li> <li>• There are no neighbouring use issues</li> <li>• There are no opportunities to enhance or create green infrastructure.</li> <li>• development would not result in the loss of public open space, public right of way or a bridleway. Site is wholly located in Flood Zone 1</li> <li>• site is not located within a Critical Drainage Area</li> <li>• site is vacant or its current use can cease at short notice</li> <li>• The site does not rely on another piece of land.</li> <li>• Not within a Minerals Safeguarding Area, Minerals Consultation Area or Waste Consultation Area</li> <li>• There is possibility of site contamination, but it can be remediated without affecting development viability.</li> <li>• development is likely viable.</li> </ul>
Biodiversity Protection and BNG study	Little/no harm – the site has limited natural habitat value. Although there is a small block of woodland Priority Habitat beyond the northern boundary, it can easily be protected during development.
HIA sift outcome	Full HIA required.
Likely mitigation/compensation requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site may be suitable for Skylark and other farmland birds.</li> </ul>
<b>Reason to allocate</b>	
Development of this site at this scale would deliver low density development in keeping with the scale and character of the village.	

<sup>1</sup> The policy context is set out at Appendix 1.

- 
- sustainable, accessible locations;
  - Giving meaningful weight to made neighbourhood plans; and
  - Securing genuine biodiversity net gain and green infrastructure.
- Unnecessary in housing land supply terms, given:
    - The recently adopted Local Plan already identifies adequate sites to meet the strategic housing requirement; and
    - Colchester has previously been found at appeal to have a comfortable five-year supply even without counting the Garden Community.

Taken together, these factors mean Policy PP26 is not justified, not consistent with national policy, and therefore unsound.

Boxted Parish Council respectfully requests that PP26 – Land North of Boxted Straight Road is deleted from the emerging Local Plan and that Boxted’s future growth continues to be guided by the adopted Boxted Neighbourhood Plan and existing Local Plan policy, with any further allocations brought forward through a review of that Plan rather than via a top-down strategic allocation.

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## 2. Site and policy context

### 2.1 Site description (from Council evidence)

The Council's own summary describes the site as:

- Greenfield arable land with hedgerows,
- Grade 3 agricultural land<sup>2</sup>,
- Adjacent to the *existing* settlement boundary and included within the Preferred Options settlement boundary,
- With no public open space or PRow loss, no utility constraints and lying wholly in Flood Zone 1, and
- Having “little/no harm” in biodiversity terms, with a priority woodland block just beyond its northern boundary.

A full Health Impact Assessment is required, and there is a recognised potential for farmland birds including skylark.

The Council concludes that development “at this scale would deliver low density development in keeping with the scale and character of the village”.

### 2.2 Boxted's strategic role

The adopted Local Plan recognises Boxted as a rural parish with limited capacity for growth. It identifies three settlement areas – Boxted Cross, Workhouse Hill and Mill Road – and makes clear that only Boxted Cross is suitable for “limited growth only”

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<sup>2</sup> Government guidance on assessing development proposals on agricultural land makes clear that “Grade 3” includes both Subgrade 3a and 3b, and that the “best and most versatile” (BMV) land is Grades 1, 2 and 3a. It also notes that Grade 3 is not subdivided on regional mapping, meaning site-specific evidence may be required to confirm whether land is BMV. In plan-making terms, allocating a Grade 3 greenfield site without clarifying whether it is 3a risks running contrary to national advice and the NPPF expectation that, where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality should be preferred.

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because this is where the few local services (school, hall, playing field)<sup>3</sup> are located; Workhouse Hill and Mill Road are specifically regarded as unsuitable for new growth due to the absence of facilities and poor public transport.

Crucially, the same text explains that development to the south of Boxted Cross along Boxted Straight Road is constrained, because:

There is a desire to prevent further ribbon development along Boxted Straight Road leading to the coalescence of settlements and to discourage further housing away from village services and facilities.

The proposed allocation PP26 sits precisely in this sensitive corridor where the adopted Local Plan explicitly warns against further growth.

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<sup>3</sup> Note the council is mistaken in saying there is a shop in Boxted. There is not. The Parish Council does not consider “shop” to be an accurate description of Boxted Cross’s current provision (i.e., there is no permanent village convenience shop), which further reduces the settlement’s sustainability credentials for a strategic-scale allocation.

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## 3. Conflict with the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan

The Boxted Neighbourhood Plan (BNP) was made in 2016 and remains part of the development plan. The Local Plan itself recognises that all development proposals in Boxted must comply with BNP policies as well as relevant Local Plan policies (Policy SS2).

### 3.1 Vision and objectives

The BNP's vision is of Boxted in 2029 as a thriving rural community that has met housing needs without sacrificing the parish's rural character or its landscape, particularly the Dedham Vale AONB and the intervening countryside between Boxted and Colchester.

Objective 1 is explicit:

- “Conserve and enhance the character and landscape of the parish and ensure that it does not coalesce with urban Colchester.”

Any allocation that materially reduces the green gap along Boxted Straight Road clearly works against this central objective.

### 3.2 Settlement boundaries – Policy SB1

BNP Policy SB1 defines settlement boundaries for Boxted's built-up areas and establishes a clear spatial strategy:

- Development within settlement boundaries is supported in principle, subject to other policies.
- Outside settlement boundaries, only small-scale rural business/leisure/tourism uses are supported where they are appropriate to the rural character.
- Housing outside but contiguous to settlement boundaries is only envisaged as rural exceptions schemes to meet identified local affordable housing needs, not general market allocations.

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PP26 proposes general market housing on a greenfield site outside the adopted settlement boundary, with no indication that it is to be restricted to rural exception affordable housing. That is directly at odds with Policy SB1.

### 3.3 Coalescence with Colchester – Policy LC1

The BNP builds on Colchester Borough Council’s Assessment of open countryside between settlements (2009). That study concluded that land between Boxted and Colchester – including land visible from Boxted Straight Road – makes a “high contribution” to maintaining separation:

- Built development between Boxted and Colchester would undermine the sense of settlement separation,
- Would lead to visual coalescence with existing houses along Straight Road, and
- Would diminish the clear sense of leaving one settlement and entering another.

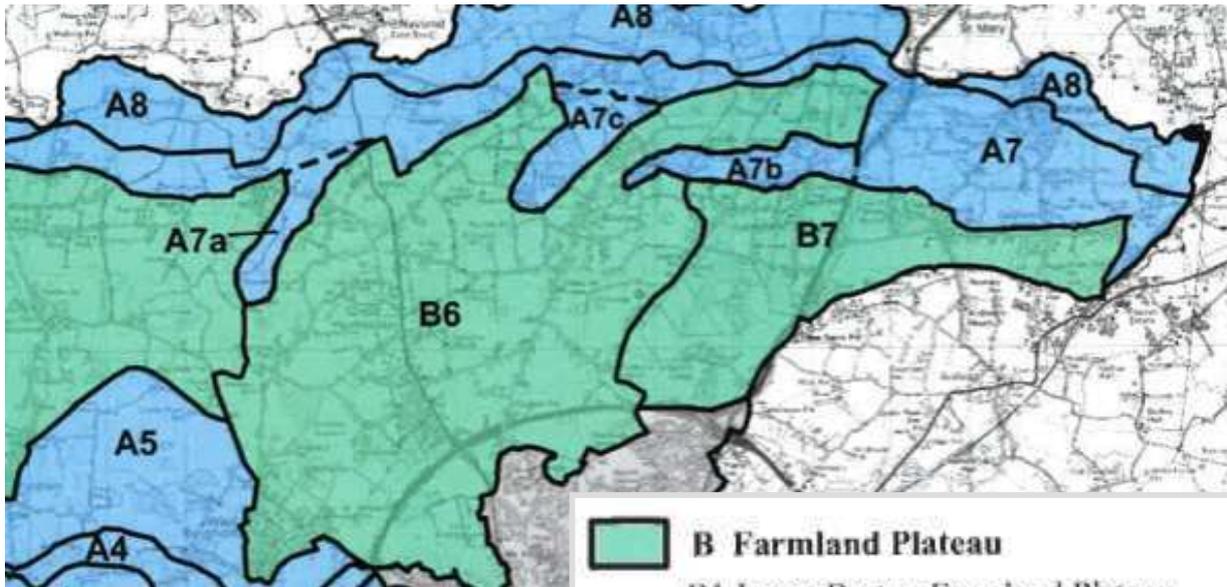
On that basis, BNP Policy LC1 states that development in Boxted will only be supported where it is sustainable and does not materially reduce the green gap between Boxted and urban Colchester, explicitly tying this back to Policy SB1.

Given PP26 is a greenfield housing allocation on Straight Road, within land identified as critical to separation, it is hard to see how it could avoid materially reducing the green gap – particularly in cumulative visual terms when read with existing ribbon development along the road.

### 3.4 Landscape character – Policy LC2

Boxted lies within three landscape character areas – including the Great Horkesley Farmland Plateau – where the Borough Landscape Character Assessment recommends preserving the tranquil, undeveloped rural character and maintaining views and the landscape setting of historic settlements such as Boxted (See map overleaf).

BNP Policy LC2 responds by requiring that any development of three or more dwellings outside or contiguous to a settlement boundary must be accompanied by a robust



landscape assessment demonstrating that adverse impacts can be fully mitigated; if they cannot, the proposal “will not be permitted”.

PP26:

- Is expressly a greenfield site outside the original settlement boundary;
- Would clearly exceed the “three dwellings” threshold; and
- Lies within a landscape specifically identified as making a high contribution to settlement separation.

Yet there is no evidence at this Local Plan stage that the landscape assessment required by LC2 has been carried out, or that any such assessment has concluded impacts could be fully mitigated.

In short, PP26 conflicts with the made Neighbourhood Plan’s core spatial, coalescence and landscape policies. Under the NPPF, strategic policies in Local Plans are expected not to undermine the planning approach set out in neighbourhood plans and to give communities genuine influence over the scale and location of development in their area.



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## 4. Conflict with the adopted Colchester Local Plan (Section 2)

### 4.1 Boxted place policy (para 6.136–6.138 and Policy SS2)

The adopted Local Plan place policy for Boxted is very clear:

- Boxted Cross is suitable for limited growth only;
- The Dedham Vale AONB abuts the settlement to the north-east and constrains development in that direction;
- Arable land and orchards constrain growth to the north-west and west;
- A local wildlife site constrains growth to the east; and
- Development southwards is constrained to avoid ribbon development along Boxted Straight Road leading to the coalescence of settlements and to discourage additional housing away from existing services.

Policy SS2 then states that all development in Boxted must comply with the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan as well as relevant Local Plan policies.

By proposing PP26 exactly where the Local Plan already states development should not occur, the emerging allocation:

- Undermines the spatial reasoning of the adopted Local Plan;
- Is inconsistent with the role of settlement boundaries as a tool for focusing growth in sustainable locations; and
- Puts the emerging Local Plan at risk of internal inconsistency between the new site-specific policy and the existing place policy for Boxted.

### 4.2 Other Villages and countryside policies (OV1 and OV2)

The Local Plan makes clear that:

- 
- Settlement boundaries are essential to preventing encroachment into the countryside and to directing development to the most sustainable locations;
  - The Plan already allocates sufficient land (14,720 homes) to meet the borough's objectively assessed needs to 2033 without needing additional general market housing in the open countryside; and
  - Residential development in the countryside is not needed to deliver the social dimension of sustainable development and is likely to be functionally isolated and car-dependent.

Policy OV1 supports only small-scale, appropriate infill and previously developed land in "Other Villages". Boxted is not an 'Other Village' - it is classed as countryside. Policy OV2 strictly limits residential development in the countryside to rural exception affordable housing and special cases (e.g. rural workers' housing).

Allocating a new greenfield site beyond the existing settlement boundary for general market housing is therefore directly at odds with this strategic approach.

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## 5. Inconsistency with the NPPF (NPPF 2024/25)

### 5.1 Plan-making tests of soundness

To be sound, the Local Plan must be:

- Positively prepared – meeting development needs while respecting constraints;
- Justified – based on an appropriate strategy, taking into account reasonable alternatives;
- Effective – deliverable and based on joint working; and
- Consistent with national policy.

Introducing PP26 into a highly constrained settlement corridor, against both the Neighbourhood Plan and the adopted Local Plan's place policy, means the emerging strategy is not the most appropriate when reasonable alternatives exist (e.g. further urban regeneration, re-phasing of existing allocations, or allocations in better-served settlements).

### 5.2 Countryside character and agricultural land

The NPPF requires plans and decisions to:

- Recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and
- Take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, preferring lower-quality land where significant development of agricultural land is unavoidable.

The site is Grade 3. "Grade 3" includes both 3a (best and most versatile) and 3b, and no evidence has been presented that this land is not 3a. At Local Plan stage, the Council should:

- Positively demonstrate that development can be directed to poorer-quality land; and

- Explain why this particular block of agricultural land, which contributes to the rural setting and separation between Boxted and Colchester, is an appropriate place to take out of production.

That analysis is missing from the evidence summary, which simply notes that the site is Grade 3 and then asserts there are “no significant constraints”.

## 5.3 Neighbourhood planning

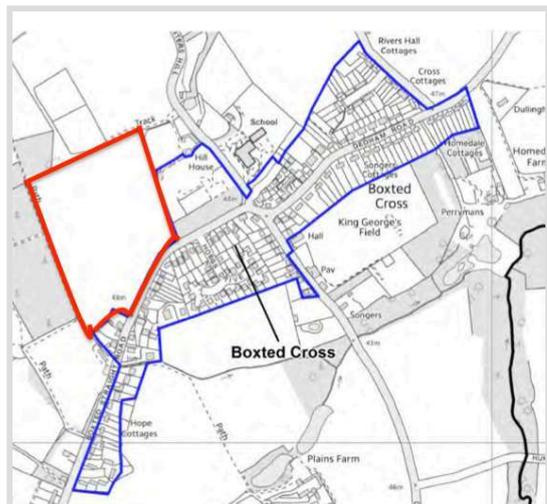
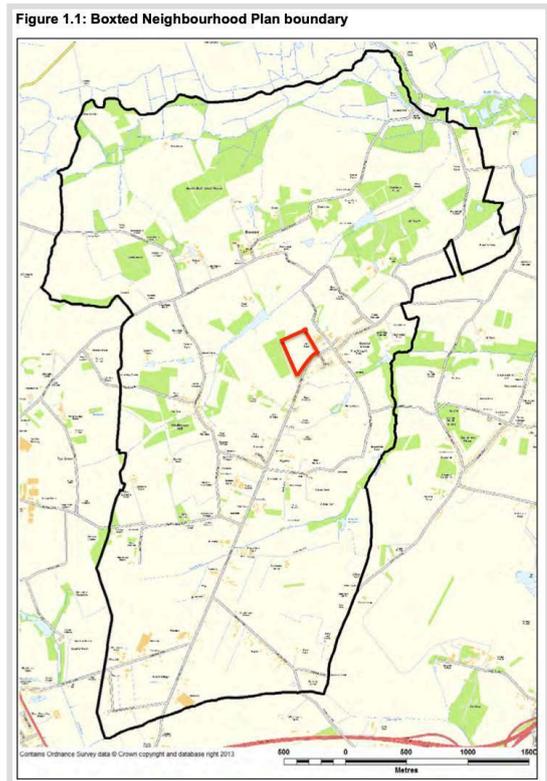
The NPPF emphasises that:

- Neighbourhood plans are part of the development plan; and
- Strategic policies should not undermine the delivery of neighbourhood plan policies and allocations.

Here, PP26 would:

- Place strategic growth directly into an area which the BNP expressly protects from coalescence (LC1/LC2); and
- Circumvent BNP Policy SB1’s clear expectation that any housing outside the settlement boundary contiguous to it should normally be rural exception affordable housing.

That is precisely the sort of outcome national policy cautions against.



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## 5.4 Sustainable transport and location of development

The NPPF's chapter on sustainable transport requires that:

- Significant development should be focused in locations which are or can be made sustainable, limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes; and
- The cumulative impacts on the transport network are acceptable.

Boxted Cross is acknowledged by the Council itself as having limited public transport, with only basic facilities and likely heavy reliance on the private car for access to employment, higher order services and most shopping.

A new allocation along Boxted Straight Road would:

- Extend the settlement further away from the focal point of local services,
- Result in additional car-based commuting along a rural road already subject to speed and safety issues, and
- Offer no realistic prospect of delivering high-quality public transport or walkable access to a broader range of facilities.

This is at odds with the NPPF's aim that plan-making should actively manage patterns of growth to reduce reliance on the private car.

### 5.4.1 Boxted Neighbourhood Plan Housing Needs Survey (2025)



Ahead of a review of the Neighbourhood Plan The Parish Council commissioned the RCCE to undertake a housing needs survey.

The conclusion of the survey was that the local community required development of up to 10 homes including 6 affordable homes, 1 shared ownership home,

#### Boxted Housing Needs Survey



July 2025

Helen Reedman  
Project Officer

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1 open market bungalow and 2 plots for self-build homes. There was no additional requirement. This indicates that a development larger than this would inherently unsustainable.

The proposed allocation of approximately 150 dwellings (on a 6.1ha greenfield site) represents a step-change in growth that is disproportionate to the settlement's scale and locally evidenced need. By the Parish Council's estimates, this quantum would equate to a very substantial percentage increase in the existing dwelling stock of Boxted Cross and the wider parish, with associated impacts on character, coalescence, and car dependence given limited services and public transport. This further reinforces that PP26 is not a justified strategy for meeting housing needs in this location.

A more proportionate approach would be to meet locally evidenced needs through small, well-related sites (and/or rural exception provision where appropriate) brought forward through the Neighbourhood Plan review and/or other sustainable allocations higher in the settlement hierarchy—avoiding the loss of open agricultural land in the Boxted–Colchester gap and avoiding increased coalescence effects.

### **5.4.2 Further concerns regarding sustainability**

There are several other reasons the proposed development should be considered inherently unsustainable.

The local Primary School is presently at capacity (206 pupils versus 210 places) so almost immediately any school provision will be outside the Parish and require car use.

There is no secondary school provision locally so all 11-18 provision will require car use.

The Bus service at Boxted Cross is very poor served by 80 and 80A - nothing before 9am into Colchester and nothing after 3:35 from Colchester meaning employment and education cannot be served via public transport.

There are no shops available in village, no Doctors, post office or cashpoint.

There is no employment in the village.

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In summary all travel for all services will in practice require a trip by car, taxi or bicycle. No services are available within 1km via a footpath.

## 5.5 Natural environment, biodiversity and green infrastructure

The updated NPPF requires plans and decisions to:

- Protect and enhance valued landscapes and soils;
- Recognise the wider benefits of natural capital and ecosystem services;
- Minimise impacts on, and secure measurable net gains for, biodiversity, including by planning at a strategic scale; and
- Allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value (so far as compatible with other policies).

The Council's own site assessment states:

- The site is greenfield farmland with hedgerows;
- It may support skylark and other farmland birds, which are nationally declining;
- There is a priority habitat woodland directly to the north; and
- There are no opportunities to enhance or create green infrastructure on the site.

These points strongly imply that:

- The land is part of a functioning farmland bird landscape (skylark is a priority species), and loss of this habitat is not environmentally neutral; and
- If the Council's own assessment concludes there are "no opportunities" to enhance or create green infrastructure, the site is a poor candidate for delivering the mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) and green infrastructure enhancements expected under both the NPPF and the Environment Act regime.

More suitable allocations would be ones deficient in green infrastructure, where new planting and habitat creation can genuinely improve ecological networks. Here, housing

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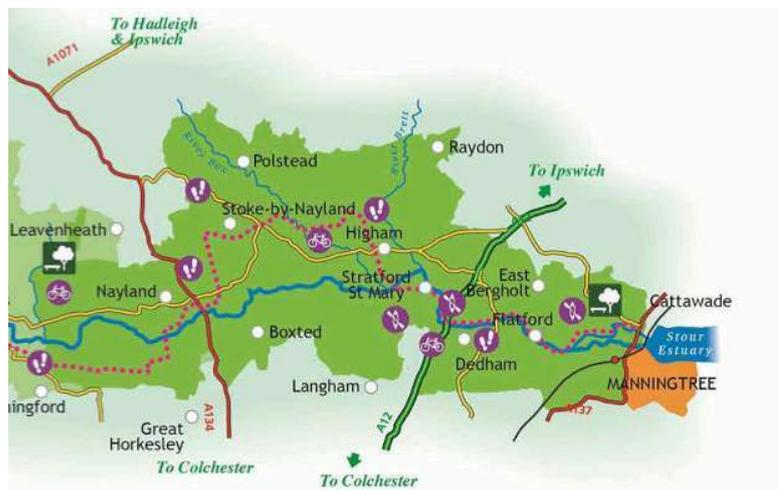
would replace habitat that currently contributes to the open rural gap and farmland bird assemblage.

## 5.6 Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (National Landscape)

The BNP notes that part of Boxted parish lies within the Dedham Vale AONB and that the area is therefore subject to the AONB Management Plan and associated Local Plan policies.

While PP26 may lie outside the AONB boundary, the NPPF gives great weight to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, including in their setting, and requires development within the setting to be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts.

Extending built development down Boxted Straight Road in the direction of Colchester:



- Risks visually linking Boxted more strongly to the urban edge; and
- Erodes the perception of a distinct rural parish abutting the AONB, thereby undermining the area's special qualities as experienced from local roads and public rights of way.

No evidence has been provided that the site's contribution to the setting of the AONB has been objectively assessed at plan-making stage.

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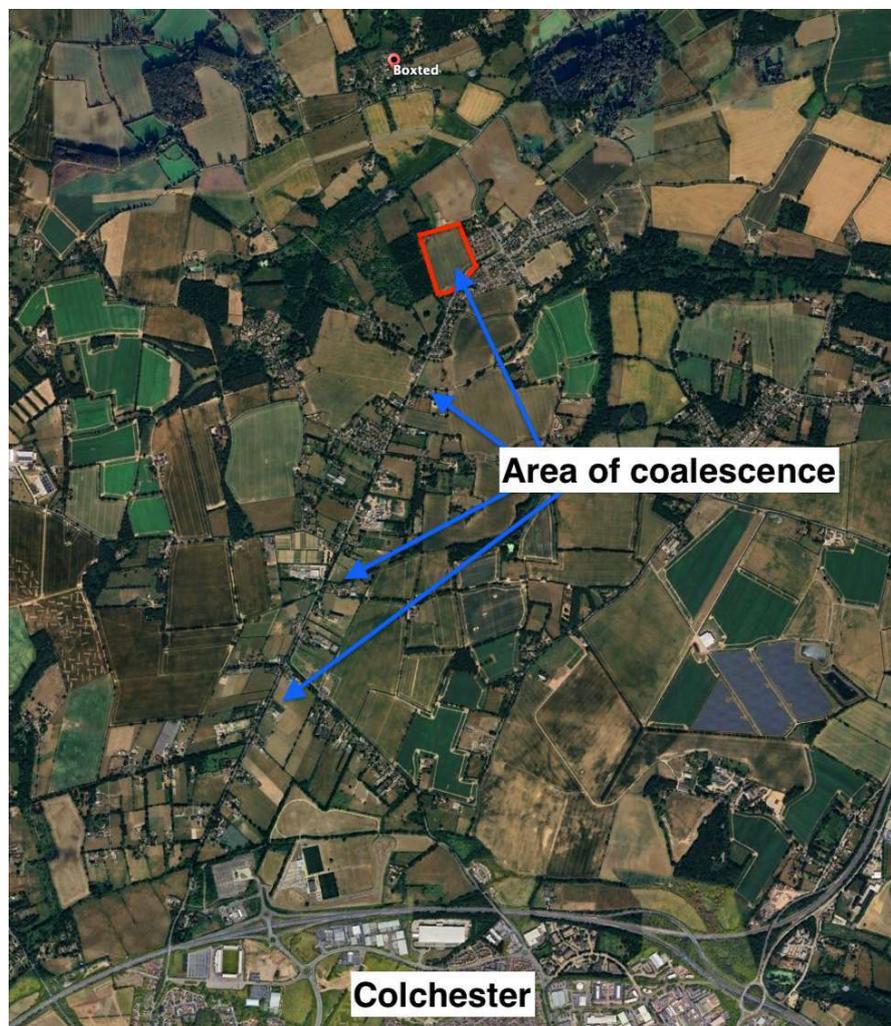
## 6. Landscape, settlement separation and visual impact

The 2009 Assessment of open countryside between settlements (prepared for Colchester Borough) specifically identifies the land between Boxted and Colchester – notably the area perceived from Straight Road and PRowWs – as making a high contribution to settlement separation. It warns that new built development here would:

- Result in visual coalescence between Boxted, Colchester and existing ribbon development;
- Seriously undermine the rural character of the land between; and
- Significantly diminish the sense of moving from one distinct settlement to another.

The BNP explicitly embeds those findings into Policy LC1 and LC2, elevating them to the development plan.

The Council's current site summary states that the site "does not contribute to coalescence". That is



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not consistent with the 2009 landscape evidence or the BNP's interpretation of that evidence. On the contrary, the evidence shows that:

- Any loss of open farmland along this stretch of Straight Road will be perceived as “filling in” the gap;
- The visual effect from PRowS and from Straight Road itself will be to link built forms, not keep them separate; and
- This effect is inherently difficult to mitigate once the fundamental pattern of development changes from open countryside to a continuous or near-continuous built frontage.

Allocation PP26 would therefore directly contradict the Council's own earlier landscape work and the BNP's coalescence policies.

In addition, the Parish Council notes that there are clear public views towards the site from Church Road and Parsonage Hill, including from within the Conservation Area and the Dedham Vale National Landscape (and/or its immediate setting), across a steep valley to the rear of the proposed allocation. These views currently form part of the experience of a distinctly rural valley landscape and reinforce perceived separation between Boxted and the urban edge. Introducing a strategic-scale housing allocation on the upper valley side would introduce built form (and associated movement and lighting) into currently open panoramas, resulting in landscape and visual harm and further reinforcing the coalescence effect described above.

The NPPF requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Landscapes, including development within their setting being sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts. It also requires particular regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the setting of heritage assets such as Conservation Areas. On that basis, PP26 cannot be regarded as justified without a robust LVIA incorporating verified viewpoints from Church Road and Parsonage Hill (and any other key receptors), with clear evidence that harm can be avoided or acceptably mitigated.

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## 7. Health, highways and accessibility

The site's evidence summary recognises that a full Health Impact Assessment (HIA) will be required. That in itself is an acknowledgement that potential health impacts (traffic, road safety, air quality, access to services, physical activity) may be significant.

The BNP flags long-standing community concerns about:

- Road safety and traffic conditions on Boxted's rural roads; and
- The importance of improving opportunities for non-car travel.

Locating new housing:

- On a high-speed rural road with limited footways;
- At a distance from village facilities; and
- Without realistic prospects for high-quality public transport, is unlikely to promote walking, cycling or public transport use, and will increase car dependency, in conflict with Local Plan transport policies (e.g. on promoting sustainable transport and sustainable access) and NPPF objectives on health and active travel.

No convincing evidence has been presented at allocation stage that these concerns can be addressed, beyond the generic statement that there are "no significant constraints".

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## 8. Housing land supply and the need (or lack of need) for PP26

### 8.1 Adopted housing requirement and current 5-year supply

Colchester's housing requirement is currently set by the adopted Section 1 Local Plan (Policy SP4), which establishes a strategic annual requirement of 920 dwellings per annum for Colchester. Section 1 was adopted in February 2021 and Section 2 (with the spatial strategy and allocations) in July 2022, so the Local Plan as a whole is still less than five years old.

In line with the NPPF and the updated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), authorities with up-to-date strategic policies (less than five years old and adopted with a five-year supply in place) are expected to measure their 5-year housing land supply (5YHLS) against the adopted plan requirement, not the latest standard-method local housing need (LHN).

Colchester's most recent formal assessment is the Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement 2025, which:

- Uses the 920 dpa requirement from Policy SP4;
- Applies a 5% buffer, resulting in a five-year requirement of 4,830 dwellings for 2025/26–2029/30; and
- Identifies a supply of 4,877 dwellings from permissions, allocations and windfalls.
- 

This equates to 5.05 years of supply and the statement expressly concludes that “the Council does have a sufficient supply of deliverable housing to meet the 5-year requirement” against the adopted Local Plan target.

The Council also notes that because Section 1 and Section 2 are less than five years old and were judged to have a five-year supply at adoption, it is not required to demonstrate a five-year supply annually for decision-taking purposes, but has done so in 2025 in the interests of transparency.

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In short, Colchester presently demonstrates a marginal but positive 5-year housing land supply of 5.05 years on the correct basis of the adopted 920 dpa requirement.

## 8.2 December 2024 housing targets and their effect on 5YHLS

The Government's December 2024 revision of the NPPF and associated guidance introduced a revised standard method for calculating *minimum* local housing need, and published new LHN figures for each authority.

For Colchester, the 2024 Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) applies this new standard method and identifies an indicative local housing need of 1,290 dwellings per annum, based on 0.8% of existing stock with an affordability uplift. This is around 24% higher than the earlier standard-method figure of 1,043 dpa and significantly above the adopted requirement of 920 dpa.

However:

- The PPG on Housing Supply and Delivery (updated 12 December 2024) is clear that, where strategic policies in an adopted plan are less than five years old, the 5YHLS must still be assessed against the adopted housing requirement, not the latest LHN figure, unless those policies have been reviewed and found out-of-date.
- The new LHN of 1,290 dpa is therefore a starting point for future plan-making (the emerging Local Plan to 2041), not an immediate replacement for the 920 dpa requirement in 5YHLS calculations while the current plan remains within its five-year window.
- National commentary on the December 2024 NPPF indicates that, from 1 July 2026, authorities whose adopted plan requirement is 80% or less of their LHN will need to apply a 20% buffer to their 5YHLS. For Colchester, 920 dpa is about 71% of the 1,290 dpa LHN, so that rule is clearly relevant in the medium term – but it does not apply yet and is to be managed through the next Local Plan and future supply updates, not by emergency allocations in the interim.

Crucially, Colchester's 2025 5YHLS Statement was prepared after the December 2024

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NPPF changes, yet still correctly uses the 920 dpa requirement and concludes there is 5.05 years of supply. There is no indication that the Council considers the new LHN of 1,290 dpa to have displaced the adopted requirement for the purposes of 5YHLS at this time.

Accordingly, the December 2024 changes have not altered Colchester’s formal 5-year supply position: the authority still demonstrates a positive 5-year supply against the adopted Local Plan requirement.

### 8.3 Implications for the proposed allocation PP26

Against this background, there is no compelling five-year housing land supply rationale for allocating sensitive greenfield land at Boxted:

- The adopted Local Plan is up-to-date, with Sections 1 and 2 both adopted within the last five years.
- The latest published 5YHLS statement confirms a 5.05-year supply against the correct adopted requirement of 920 dpa, even before any contribution from PP26.
- The higher December 2024 LHN of 1,290 dpa is a forward-looking benchmark for the emerging Local Plan and longer-term strategy, not a justification for short-term, ad hoc rural allocations that conflict with existing Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan policies.

In other words:

- PP26 is not needed to maintain Colchester’s 5-year housing land supply.
- Its allocation cannot be justified on the basis of averting an imminent 5YHLS shortfall or avoiding the “tilted balance”.
- Any additional land needed to respond to the higher LHN and future buffer requirements should be identified strategically through the emerging Local Plan – focusing on more sustainable, better-served and less constrained locations – rather than by allocating a site which directly conflicts with the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan and the adopted place-based strategy for Boxted.

The absence of any demonstrable 5YHLS deficit therefore reinforces the conclusion

that PP26 is neither necessary nor justified in soundness terms and should be removed from the emerging Local Plan.

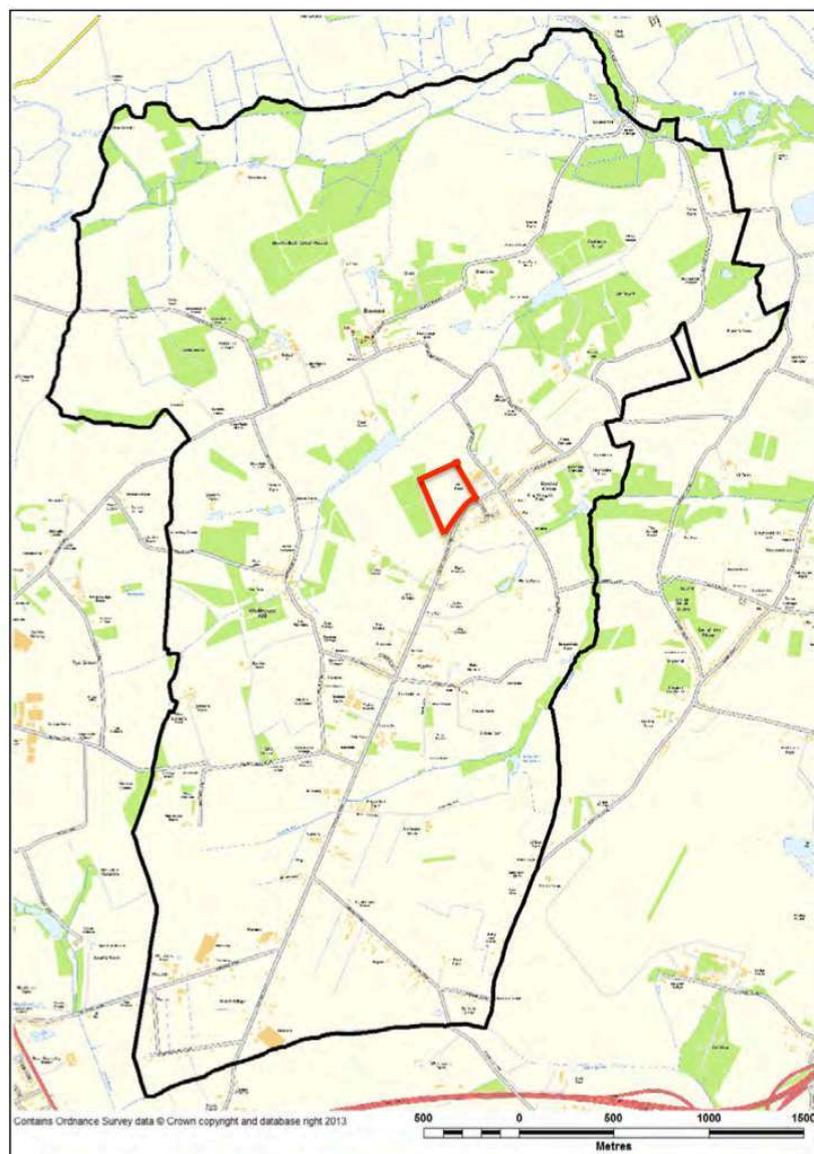
## 8.4 Role of the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan if housing land supply falls below 5 years

Even if Colchester's 5-year housing land supply (5YHLS) were to fall below 5 years at some point in the plan period, the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan would remain a key part of the development plan and cannot simply be set aside.

Under the NPPF (December 2024):

- The development plan is the combination of strategic and non-strategic policies in force at any time, including neighbourhood plans that have been made.
- Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans), permission

Figure 1.1: Boxted Neighbourhood Plan boundary



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“should not usually be granted.”

- Once a neighbourhood plan is made, its policies take precedence over existing non-strategic local plan policies for the same area, unless superseded by later strategic or non-strategic policies.

The Boxted Neighbourhood Plan was made (adopted) on 8 December 2016 and from that date has formed part of the statutory development plan for Colchester. Its policies on settlement form, landscape, local character and the appropriate scale and location of housing in Boxted therefore continue to shape both decision-taking and plan-making, unless and until they are formally replaced.

### **8.4.1 Neighbourhood plans where the presumption and lack of 5YHLS apply**

Where an authority cannot demonstrate a 5YHLS (or fails the Housing Delivery Test), footnote 8 to paragraph 11 of the NPPF triggers the “presumption in favour of sustainable development”, meaning the most important policies for determining the application are treated as out-of-date.

However, paragraph 14 of the NPPF provides specific protection for neighbourhood plans in exactly those situations:

where the presumption in paragraph 11d applies to housing proposals, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with a neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided that:

(a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the decision; and

(b) it contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement.

In Boxted’s case:

- The Neighbourhood Plan was made in December 2016, so it is more than 5

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years old.

- As a result, Boxted does not benefit from the *extra* “paragraph 14 protection” (which only applies to plans made within the last 5 years and meeting their housing requirement).
- Nevertheless, the Plan’s policies still form part of the development plan and carry significant weight, particularly where they are consistent with the NPPF’s objectives on rural housing (paragraphs 82–83), protecting local character, avoiding coalescence and conserving the intrinsic beauty of the countryside.

For plan-making, the picture is even clearer: the level of current 5YHLS or any theoretical future dip below 5 years does not negate the statutory status of the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan. The emerging Local Plan must still:

- Have regard to the existing neighbourhood plan;
- Avoid undermining its spatial strategy and policies without robust evidence; and
- Demonstrate that any new allocation at Boxted (such as PP26) is compatible with, or properly justifies departing from, those locally endorsed policies.

### 8.4.2 Practical implication for PP26

Even if Colchester’s 5YHLS were to fall below 5 years at some point:

- There is no basis in current national policy for treating the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan as irrelevant or “switched off”.
- The Plan continues to constrain and shape the pattern and scale of development in Boxted as part of the development plan.
- Any allocation that cuts directly across its housing, settlement and landscape policies – as PP26 would – risks being unsound, because it fails to respect the plan-led approach and the local community’s democratically endorsed vision for the village.

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## 9. Other relevant policy and evidence

Beyond the documents already cited, PP26 also appears to sit uncomfortably with:

- The Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment, which for the valley slopes and farmland plateau around Boxted recommends conserving tranquil, undeveloped character, preserving cross-valley views and ensuring any edge-of-settlement development is modest in scale and sympathetic to historic villages.
- The Dedham Vale AONB Management Plan, which seeks to safeguard both the designated area and its setting from incremental urbanisation and intrusive development.
- National and local commitments to biodiversity net gain and nature recovery, which favour directing major development to locations where habitat networks can be enhanced rather than eroded.
- Light pollution / dark skies. The Parish Council places significant weight on protecting dark skies in and around the Dedham Vale National Landscape. The NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation. A 150-dwelling strategic allocation would inevitably generate new and extensive sources of external lighting (streets, parking, security and domestic lighting) with potential to spill into the wider rural valley landscape and be experienced from the National Landscape and its setting.

If the Council is minded to retain PP26, the policy should (as a minimum) include a requirement for a lighting strategy that applies dark-sky principles (full cut-off luminaires, minimised column heights, warm colour temperatures where appropriate, directional control, curfews/controls, and demonstrated avoidance of light spill to sensitive receptors), with assessment from key viewpoints and ecological receptors.

Taken together, these reinforce the conclusion that Boxted Straight Road is the wrong place for a new strategic allocation.

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## 10. Conclusion and requested changes

For the reasons above, the proposed allocation PP26 – Land North of Boxted Straight Road, Boxted:

1. Conflicts with the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan (Policies SB1, LC1 and LC2) in relation to settlement boundaries, coalescence and landscape protection.
2. Contradicts the adopted Colchester Local Plan place policy for Boxted, which explicitly seeks to prevent further ribbon development southwards along Boxted Straight Road to avoid coalescence and unsustainable patterns of growth.
3. Is inconsistent with key NPPF principles, including:
  - Protecting the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and best and most versatile land;
  - Supporting made neighbourhood plans and not undermining them;
  - Concentrating development in genuinely sustainable, accessible locations; and
  - Securing meaningful biodiversity net gains and green infrastructure.
4. Is not required to maintain an adequate five-year housing land supply, given the up-to-date Local Plan, the strategic allocations already in place, and previous appeal evidence of a comfortable supply position.

In the opinion of the Parish Council, the inclusion of PP26 makes the emerging Local Plan unsound in respect of that allocation because it is not justified and not consistent with national policy.

Requested modification

- That Policy PP26 and the associated allocation of Land North of Boxted Straight Road be deleted from the emerging Local Plan; and
- That the Plan explicitly re-affirm the role of the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan in

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guiding any future growth in the parish, with any further housing allocations brought forward via a neighbourhood plan review or through genuinely sustainable alternatives elsewhere in the settlement hierarchy.

- If the Council is minded to retain PP26, the policy must be amended to: (i) require proportionate quantum/scale justified against local evidence; (ii) require a detailed Agricultural Land Classification assessment to confirm whether BMV land would be lost and to evidence why poorer-quality alternatives cannot be used; (iii) require a robust LVIA incorporating verified views from Church Road and Parsonage Hill and other key receptors; and (iv) include a dark-sky compliant external lighting strategy requirement to avoid light pollution impacts on the Dedham Vale National Landscape, its setting, ecology and local amenity.

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## Appendix 1 - Development Plan Context

### Colchester currently has an adopted Local Plan in two parts:

- Section 1 (North Essex Authorities' Shared Strategic Plan) – adopted February 2021, covering strategic policies including the overall housing requirement for Colchester of 920 dwellings per annum (dpa) under Policy SP4.
- Section 2 (Colchester-specific policies) – adopted July 2022, setting the settlement hierarchy, spatial distribution of growth and site allocations up to 2033 (including rural settlements such as Boxted).

These documents together form the current statutory Local Plan for Colchester and remain the primary starting point for decision-making in accordance with section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Alongside the Local Plan, Boxted is covered by the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan 2014–2029, which:

- Was made (adopted) on 8 December 2016 following independent examination and referendum.
- Forms part of the development plan for Colchester for the Boxted parish area, with policies intended to guide development in the village over the period to 2029.

Although now more than five years old, the Boxted Neighbourhood Plan continues to have full statutory status as part of the development plan. Its policies on the scale, location and character of development in Boxted are therefore directly relevant to any proposed strategic housing allocation in the new Local Plan.

### Emerging Colchester Local Plan (2026–2041) and Regulation 18 Status

Because Local Plans must be reviewed at least every five years, Colchester is now

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preparing a new Local Plan to 2041.

Key points for context:

- The current plan (Sections 1 and 2) runs nominally to 2033 and must be reviewed and updated to remain effective.
- The Council is now consulting on the Preferred Options Local Plan (Colchester Local Plan 2041), which is being carried out under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- The Preferred Options document expressly confirms it is a draft Local Plan 2041 published for a six-week period of public consultation under Regulation 18, after which comments will be considered and changes made before a Regulation 19 submission version is prepared.

In policy terms, Regulation 18 is an *early plan-making stage*. Under Regulation 18, a local planning authority:

- Identifies the subject of a local plan and invites representations on what it should contain.
- May publish “issues and options” or a “preferred options” draft, but there is no requirement that the plan is in a final form.

The Preferred Options Local Plan therefore:

- Has not been examined by an independent Inspector;
- Has not been found sound; and
- Has not been adopted by the Council.

Under the NPPF (December 2024), the weight to be given to emerging plans depends on their stage of preparation, the extent of unresolved objections and consistency with national policy. At Regulation 18, policies carry limited material weight: they are relevant context, but cannot displace the adopted Local Plan and made Neighbourhood Plan, especially where specific allocations (such as PP26 at Boxted) are contested and may be modified or removed before adoption.

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# National Policy Context – NPPF (December 2024) and New Housing Targets

The current national policy framework is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as revised on 12 December 2024.

Key relevant points include:

- The NPPF re-affirms that plan-making should be genuinely plan-led, meeting development needs through up-to-date Local Plans.
- It requires strategic policies to be reviewed and, where necessary, updated at least every five years, especially where the applicable local housing need (LHN) has changed significantly.
- It introduces a revised “standard method” for calculating *minimum* local housing need for each local authority in England, with Government issuing indicative Local Housing Need figures in December 2024 (“December 2024 – new standard method”).

For Colchester specifically:

- The Colchester Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) (Iceni, September 2024) calculates a Standard Method LHN of 1,043 dpa under the *previous* standard method using 2014-based household projections and a 2023 affordability ratio of 9.57.
- An appendix to the same LHNA then applies the revised standard method consulted on by Government, which is based on 0.8% of existing dwelling stock per annum, with an enhanced affordability uplift and no cap. For Colchester this yields:
  - Dwelling stock: 84,917
  - Step 1 baseline (0.8% of stock): 679 dwellings per year
  - Affordability uplift: 90%
  - Resulting LHN: 1,290 dpa, described in the LHNA as “Source: MHCLG, 2024”.
- The LHNA notes this represents an increase of 247 dpa (around 24%) over the earlier Standard Method figure of 1,043 dpa.

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At national level, the Government and professional commentary confirm that these December 2024 figures represent minimum local housing need, not Local Plan requirements, and are to be used as the starting point for setting future plan targets.

In parallel, briefing material on the new NPPF confirms that from 1 July 2026, any authority whose adopted Local Plan requirement is 80% or less of its annual LHN will have to apply a 20% buffer to its 5-year housing land supply.

Since Colchester's adopted plan requirement is 920 dpa and the new LHN is 1,290 dpa, the adopted requirement is roughly 71% of the new LHN ( $920 \div 1,290$ ), which is below 80% and therefore relevant to future buffer requirements – but that new rule does not take effect until July 2026.