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**Date:** 14 January 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **Colchester Local Plan – Regulation 18 Preferred Options Consultation –**

#### **Colchester Northern Gateway and Land west of Cuckoo Farm Way , A12 Junction 28, Colchester**

On behalf of our client, Colchester City Council, we hereby submit representations with respect of the Colchester City Council Preferred Options Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation.

Our representations relate to Colchester City Council owned land and land interests at Colchester Northern Gateway.

The representation seeks to ensure the strategic importance of land in this location continues to be formally reflected within the Local Plan including its potential to support sustainable development including the potential for important strategy infrastructure such as a Blue Light Hub providing facilities for emergency services.

In this respect the representation relates to both land within the Northern Gateway more widely and the also to a specific land parcel west of Cuckoo Farm Way which has been identified as having potential to support this use.

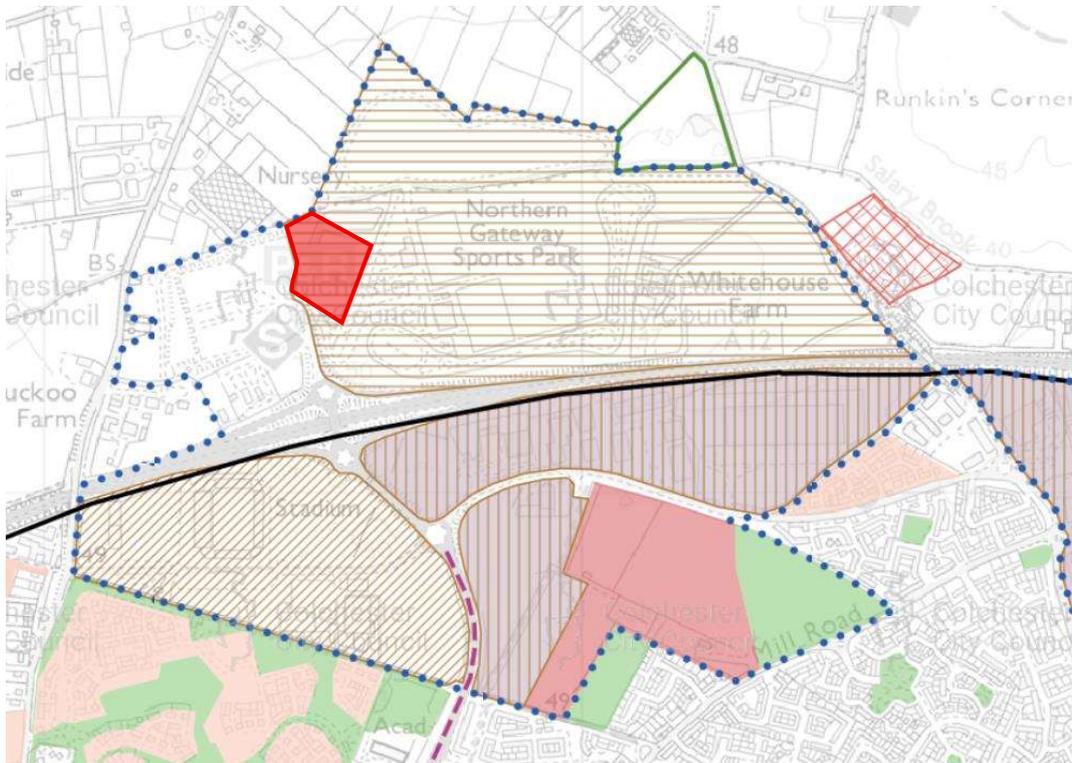
Enclosed with this submission are:

- Site location plan
- Proposed highway access arrangements – AECOM drawing 60689516-ACM-00-XX-SK-CE-0006 Rev B
- Tree Survey Report – AECOM 6089516-ACM-ARB-XX-RP-EN-3000001

#### **Colchester Northern Gateway**

The north of Colchester and Colchester Northern Gateway specifically is recognised in the adopted Local Plan as a sustainable location where there is potential for development to support needs .This includes the Spatial

Strategy, Approach to Growth Locations as set out in section 3 of the adopted Local Plan, and Policy NC1: North Colchester and Severalls Strategic Economic Area.



The above extract of the existing adopted policies map reflects these plan policies which Policy NC1 show by the blue dotted line and the specific northern gateway zones shown by the hatched lines.

#### Emerging Local Plan - Policy OA4

In the emerging Local Plan, the Northern Gateway is covered by Policy OA4.

The Northern Gateway Opportunity Area is outlined by a black dot and dash dashed line with the red diagonal hatching indicating the Northern Gateway Mixed Use allocation, the pink area the Preferred Options Employment Allocation and the green Open Space.



The area included within the Northern Gateway Opportunity Area (OA4) is now significantly smaller than the area covered by the North Colchester and Severalls Strategic Economic Area (NC1) within the adopted Local Plan. It no longer includes, for example, the Park and Ride, Sports Park, Leisure Park or Community Stadium.

Whilst it is acknowledged that these parcels of land have been developed out, they do however still form part of the wider Northern Gateway development and it is considered beneficial for the policy to recognise this as a strategic location.

This is particularly the case to ensure that any new development, redevelopment that may come forward, including potential changes of use or extension or expansion to existing facilities are still safeguarded by policy.

For instance, any development which is currently within Zone 3, north of the A12 is technically outside of the settlement boundary and thus would face undue policy constraints if it were not protected by an overarching Northern Gateway location policy which supports new development which continues to facilitate growth in this location.

The Sustainability Appraisal Report (February 2025) confirms that North Colchester has seen significant change in recent years, this has included the opening of the A12 junction 28 and the Northern Approaches Road (Via Urbis Romanae) and the development of the Northern Gateway sports and leisure park, and Severalls and Chesterwell urban extensions (paragraph 2.70). Although therefore the area has been developed, it is necessary to continue to ensure that it is protected by Policy to safeguard any future growth aspirations.

Indeed, although this Site is located within Northern Gateway Zone 3 which is land safeguarded primarily for a range of sport and recreation uses within use classes D, the opportunity now exists to develop this land beneficially

for alternative uses, making efficient use of land in a strategic location. It is thus key that the policy is able to respond to these changing circumstances to ensure that development opportunities are not stymied.

The current draft Policy OA4 relates only to the remaining areas of land which are part of Northern Gateway and which are undeveloped. It safeguards this land for future development opportunities as set out within Policy OA4 for a mix of uses including residential uses, open space and other commercial uses.

With the above in mind, Policy OA4 should therefore be expanded to ensure that the whole Northern Gateway site, both developed and undeveloped, is included within its remit and that the mix of uses provided for by policy is sufficiently flexible to support this strategy growth location.

### **Land west of Cuckoo Farm Way**

This representation also relates more specifically to the potential for development on Land West of Cuckoo Farm Way.

Site is located to the west of Colchester Rugby Club and Colchester Sports Park and to the east of the Mile End Colchester North Park and Ride. To the south west is the BP Service Station and McDonald's Drive Thru restaurant. The Site is located directly from Junction 28 of the A12 and to the north of Colchester United Football Club and other facilities including David Lloyd, Hollywood Bowl and various car dealerships.

The Site is currently utilised by Colchester & District Archery Club as part of the Colchester Sports Park. The Site is relatively flat and is well screened on its western, northern and eastern boundaries by trees and vegetation.

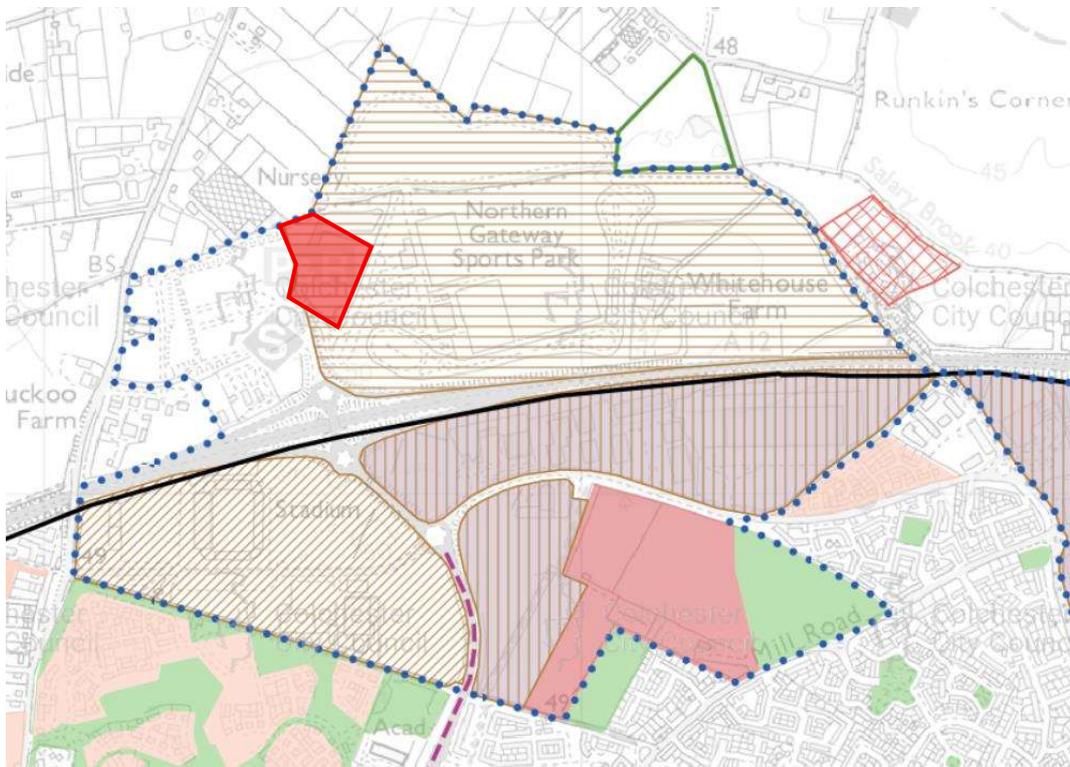
In the adopted Local Plan the Site is within the North Colchester and Severalls Strategic Economic Area covered under Policy NC1. It is located within Northern Gateway Zone 3. It is adjacent to the Settlement Boundary of North Colchester which sits just below Central Colchester in the adopted Spatial Hierarchy (Policy SG1) and which is defined as the *"next sub-level of well-connected, sustainable locations for growth."*

The Site is indicated in red on the extract of the Proposals Map below, Northern Gateway Zone 3 is indicated by the orange horizontal hatching whilst the wider North Colchester and Severalls Strategic Economic Area indicated by the blue dotted line.

There are no heritage assets within close proximity of the Site nor are there any ecological or landscape designations on the Site. The Site is located within Flood Zone 1 which has a low probability of flooding.

The Site is located within Colchester Northern Gateway which is an area to the north of Colchester being developed to create a new sport, leisure, business and residential destination of regional significance. The Northern Gateway is to benefit from an integral digital network to provide ultra-fast broadband to homes and businesses. It is thus a key sustainable and strategic location for growth.

The Site is well connected via public transport and pedestrian links. There is footpath connectivity to the south to the wider Northern Gateway development whilst the Site is immediately adjacent to the Colchester North Park and Ride. The Site thus provides opportunities for active travel and public transport.



A particular benefit of the site location is its location close to the A12 strategic road network and also to wider employment and housing areas in North Colchester. This supports the potential of the site to provide for strategic infrastructure such as facilities for blue light emergency services. More detail on this is provided below.

### Technical Work

A Tree Survey Report (June 2025) has been produced which has surveyed all existing trees on the Site and immediately adjacent to it. The Site includes no recorded ancient semi natural woodland, replanted ancient woodland or priority habitat designations relating to trees. No Tree Preservation Order (TPO), Conservation Areas or Sites of Special Scientific Interest have been identified which could influence trees within or adjacent to the Site. This will include a need to consider the protection of hedgerows around and adjoining the site. Although there are a number of high quality (category A) trees identified on the Site, these are all located around its boundary and the Site can be developed without significantly impacting on trees whilst a scheme can be designed so that any proposed access has a minimal impact on existing trees.

Highways pre-application engagement has also been undertaken to date including meetings with Essex County Council Highways. This has resulted in AECOM refining the highway access proposals to ensure all highway requirement can be met. These are now reflected in the revised access plan as appended with this submission (AECOM drawing 60689516-ACM-00-XX-SK-CE-0006 Rev B).

## Planning Assessment

As set out above, it is considered the land in this location should be recognised in the Local Plan as having potential to support strategic infrastructure including blue light emergency services

The site represents a key location to develop for a Blue Light Hub. A Blue Light Hub comprises a shared facility where multiple emergency services, such as police, fire and rescue, and ambulance, are based together on one site to improve collaboration and response.

There is potential to provide facilities in one central and strategic location.

Whilst it is recognised the site is currently utilised by the Colchester & District Archery Club, it is considered such a use is well suited to other sites in and around Colchester, due to its limited built form and flexibility in location, and ability to be located within the wider landscape. It is proposed that the Archery use could be accommodated on nearby land within the Colchester Northern Gateway Area with land close to the stadium being considered as one suitable location.

The location of site to the north of A12 is however prime for a Blue Light Hub offering a strategic location for such critical facilities bearing in mind its proximity to the A12, thus enabling the regional functions to be better located, and a central location to reach the surrounding residential area.

There are certain operational requirements that have been taken into account in identifying the Site as a key location for a Blue Light Hub. These include proximity to the main road networks in terms of ensuring rapid response times; safe, direct access for emergency vehicles; sufficient on site space for bays, turning circles and parking; centrality between services; and good public transport links.

## Summary

As part of the work and on behalf of our client, we would wish to continue to engage with the Local Planning Authority to ensure the potential and opportunities for important infrastructure at Colchester Northern Gateway is fully reflected in the final version of the Local Plan.

It is requested that the allocation of land at North Colchester within Policy OA4 is reviewed to ensure that the plan contains adequate provisions to support growth or redevelopment proposals across the whole of the North Colchester area, similar to the approach taken by Policy NC1. This should also include sufficiently flexible policy wording to allow for infrastructure alongside community and sports uses.

A specific allocation of land west of Cuckoo Farm Way for a Blue Light Hub would also represent a strategic and sustainable opportunity to enhance emergency service provision in Colchester. The Site's proximity to Junction 28 of the A12, its central location within the Northern Gateway, and its excellent connectivity via public transport and active travel routes make it ideally suited to meet operational requirements for rapid response and collaboration between services.

The development of a Blue Light Hub at this location would provide an opportunity to consolidate facilities, improve efficiency, and support wider public service objectives. Furthermore, the Site's characteristics - such as its flat topography, absence of significant environmental constraints, and ability to accommodate necessary infrastructure - reinforce its suitability for this critical use.

The new use is supported by initial technical work including highways access work and tree report.

Given the strategic importance of the Northern Gateway and its role as a key growth area, it is recommended that Policy OA4 be expanded to include both developed and undeveloped land within Northern Gateway and explicitly support development of infrastructure such as a Blue Light Hub. Alternatively, a specific allocation for this Site within the emerging Local Plan would ensure that emergency services can continue to operate effectively and respond to the needs of a growing population.

Our client is willing to discuss the opportunities for the Site with the Council as part of the Local Plan review process.

Yours sincerely

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## Site Location Plan

