

# **West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan Position Statement**

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## 1. Introduction

In early 2013, West Bergholt Parish Council resolved to start the process of preparing a neighbourhood plan, a document that will describe how the local community wishes their local area to develop over the period to 2021, in line with the timescales for the existing Core Strategy for Colchester Borough.

The purpose of this document is to set out the background information that will inform the development of the West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan (WBNP). It explores the policy context within which the neighbourhood plan will sit, together with statistical evidence about the parish and a summary of the outcomes of the community engagement to date. The aim is to provide an understanding of the issues, challenges, constraints and opportunities that exist in the parish and that will need to be considered when putting together the neighbourhood plan.

The document will enable the steering group to develop a vision and objectives as well as determine potential development sites if desired and the corresponding site selection criteria. These in turn will form the basis of the next stage of public consultation so that they can be finalised and the Pre-Submission WBNP developed which will be taken to statutory consultation. In its final form, the WBNP Plan will set out planning policies to manage the direction of future growth, change and development in the Plan area.

## 2. About Neighbourhood Planning

A Neighbourhood Plan is a new type of planning document that was introduced by the Localism Act which came into force in April 2012. Neighbourhood Plans are intended to give local people a greater say in the future of their communities in terms of spatial development and land-use planning.

Paragraphs 183 to 185 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) talks about Neighbourhood Planning stating:

"Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Parishes and neighbourhood forums can use neighbourhood planning to:

- set planning policies through neighbourhood plans to determine decisions on planning applications; and
- grant planning permission through Neighbourhood Development Orders and Community Right to Build Orders for specific development which complies with the order.

The process provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right types of development for their community. The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area as set out in the Colchester Local Plan. They should not promote less development than set out in the Local Plan or undermine its strategic policies.

Outside these strategic priorities neighbourhood plans will be able to shape and direct sustainable development in their area.

A neighbourhood plan will ultimately form a section of the Local Plan suite of documents and must therefore be rigorously tested at both Examination and local referendum. The Examination will test that the neighbourhood plan meets some 'basic conditions':

- it must have regard to national planning policy;
- it must be in general conformity with the strategic objectives of the local development plan, in this case the Local Plan for Colchester Borough Council;
- it must be aligned to the principles of sustainable development, balancing the positive and negative impacts on the economy, environment and local community; and
- it must meet EU obligations, for example on environmental and human rights legislation.

The referendum will check for local support and requires a simple majority in favour of the plan. Once a neighbourhood plan has been brought into force, the policies it contains take precedence over existing non-strategic policies in the Local Plan for that neighbourhood, where they are in conflict.

Neighbourhood plans are intended to be locally led. Hence in addition to the basic conditions, the body bringing forward the neighbourhood plan must provide evidence to show that all members of the community have had the opportunity to get involved in the process and put forward their views. A Consultation Statement will need to be prepared that sets out what has been undertaken to show this.

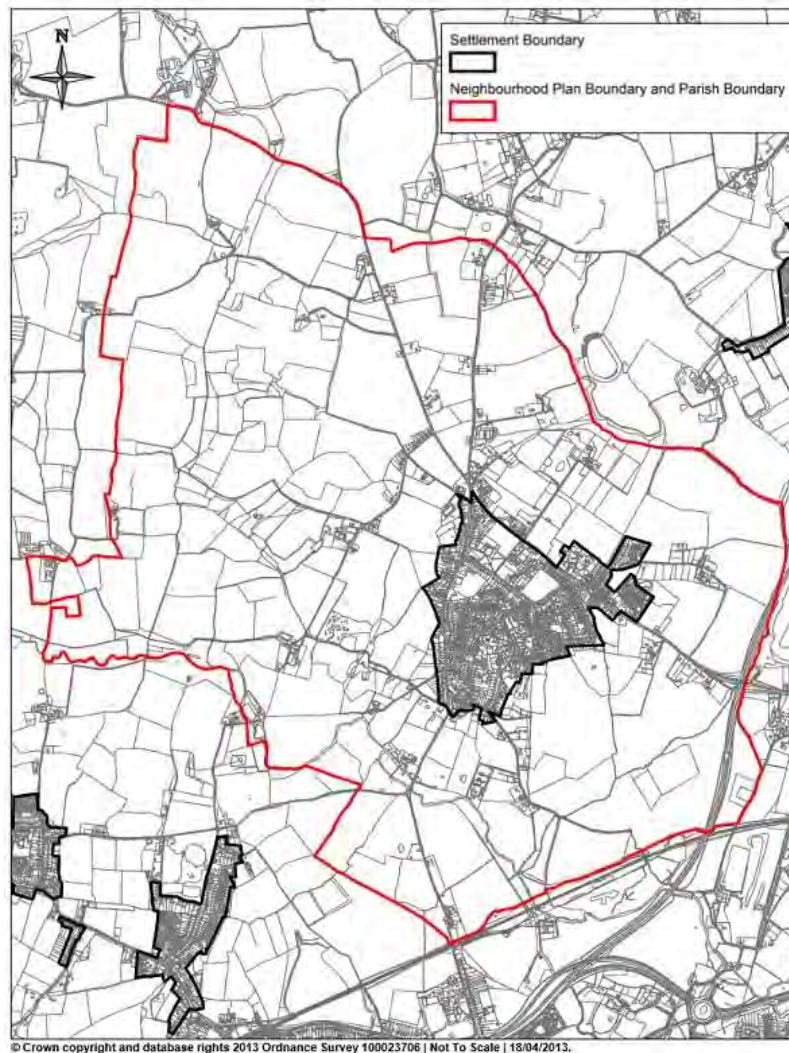
### 3. The process

On the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2013, Colchester Borough Council approved the designation of the 'Neighbourhood Area', which is contiguous with the boundary of West Bergholt Parish, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (see map below). A Steering Committee comprising volunteers and members of the parish council was formed to guide the neighbourhood planning process.

This process comprises a number of stages:

- **Designate the neighbourhood area** – outlining the area that the plan will cover
- **Engage the community** - giving the community the opportunity to input their views on what they would like to see reflected in the plan
- **Build the evidence base** –collecting evidence and data that will need to be taken into account when preparing the plan. This can involve the selection of sites and criteria for site selection and also a consultation on potential options for the plan's contents
- **Pre-submission draft** – bringing together the evidence - statistical and public engagement - to develop a draft of the Neighbourhood Plan policies that will be taken to formal consultation
- **Independent examination** – ensuring that the plan meets the basic conditions
- **Local referendum** - taking the plan to the local community to be formally ratified at simple referendum

Once the plan has been formally adopted by the council and brought into legal effect, decision-makers will be legally obliged to take what it says into account when considering planning applications and other proposals for development in the neighbourhood area.



**Map of West Bergholt Neighbourhood Area**

#### **4. A brief history of West Bergholt**

West Bergholt is a small rural parish located to the north west of Colchester. The majority of its 3,300 residents live in the village of West Bergholt. Dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the village was originally known as Bercolta, later recorded as Bergholt Sackville after the Sackville family who held the main manor from the early 12<sup>th</sup> century to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, finally becoming West Bergholt in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to distinguish it from East Bergholt in Suffolk.

The landscape surrounding the parish is attractive, though largely flat, and is bounded to the south and east by the sloping valleys of the River Colne and St Botolph's Brook. The north and east are arable farmlands interspersed with small woodlands. Indeed the name Bergholt is derived from the Anglo-saxon terms 'beorg' meaning hill and 'holt' meaning wood. There are seven Local Wildlife Sites of importance for nature conservation.

The town has a largely agricultural background although during the 16<sup>th</sup> century the cloth trade played an important economic role, in particular removing natural oils from cloth and spinning wool. The village successfully lobbied for an Act of Parliament to exclude them and other Essex

villages from the 1557 Act which forbade non-market towns to make or sell woollen cloth. During the 1800s the village was home to Daniell’s brewery which operated successfully until the 1950s at which point it was forced to sell due to financial losses. The new owner, Trumans, operated from the former site until 1989, when it was redeveloped into flats.

Nowadays, with the decline in agriculture, many residents commute to Colchester for work as well as towns further afield such as Ipswich and Chelmsford because of its close proximity to the A12. It is also a desirable location for those commuting into London being only 2.5 miles from the main railway line. Development has been modest with the addition of several small housing estates over recent decades.

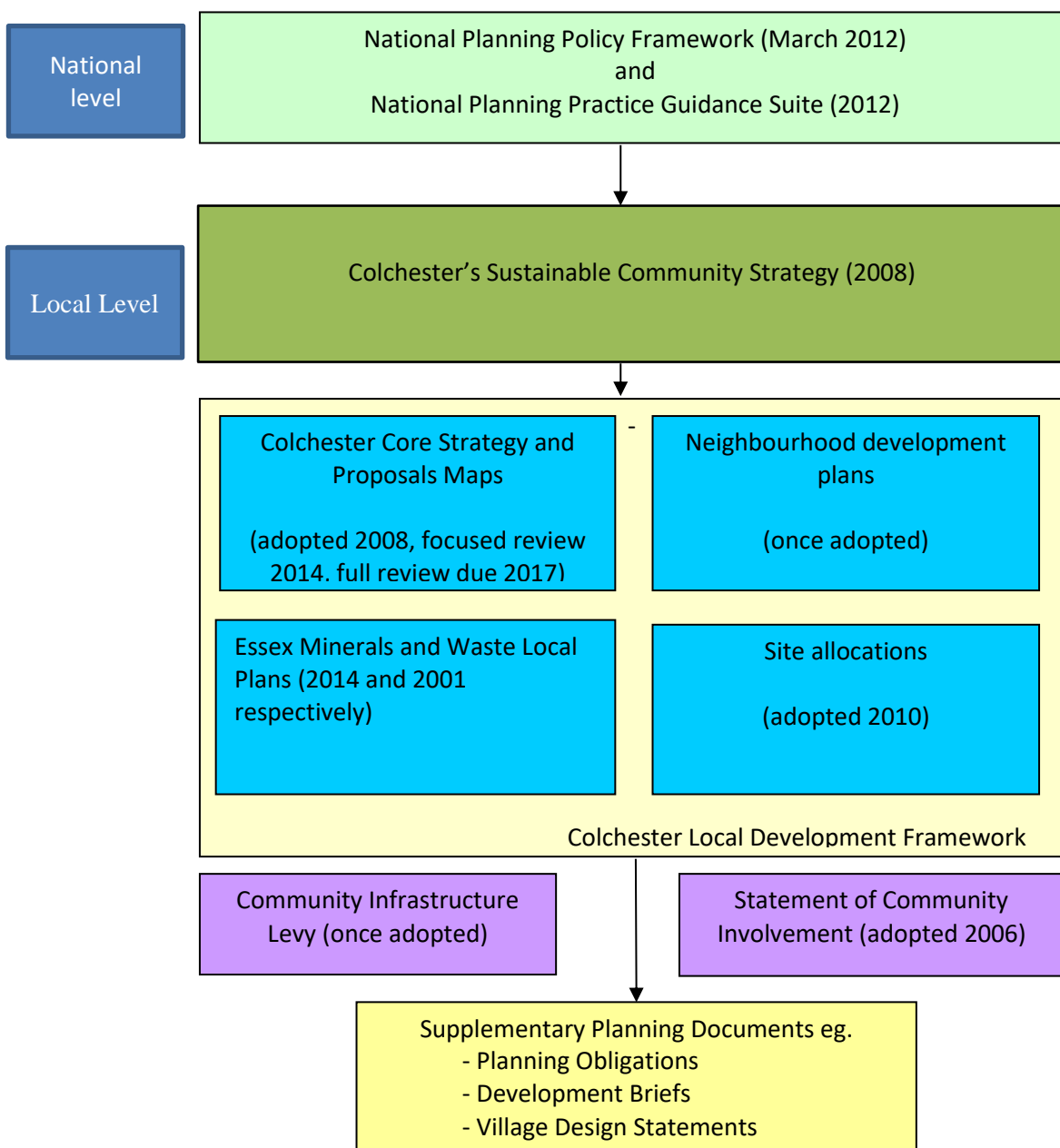


**Map of the village of West Bergholt**

## 5. The Planning Context

West Bergholt parish lies within the Borough of Colchester in the County of Essex. There are a number of adopted and emerging policies that will have an impact on the future of West Bergholt and which need to be given regard within the West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan (WBNP). Equally, there are numerous strategic principles and objectives at both the national and local level that the emerging WBNP will need to support. This section explores these in more detail. A Neighbourhood Profile for West Bergholt is included in Appendix A.

The diagram below illustrates the planning landscape in relation to West Bergholt. The Neighbourhood Plan will ultimately form part of the Local Development Plan for Colchester Borough Council.



## 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Published in March 2012, the NPPF sets out the planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied in order to achieve sustainable development. Paras 183 to 185 of the NPPF set out the principles of neighbourhood planning. It also sets out the relative weight of plans that have successfully passed a local referendum with Para 198 importantly stating that "where a planning application conflicts with a neighbourhood plan that has been brought into force, planning permission should not normally be granted." The key policy principles that need to be borne in mind including:

- the neighbourhood plan should demonstrate that it supports the presumption in favour of sustainable development (para. 14)
- it will need to be in general conformity with the strategic development needs set out in the Colchester Core Strategy and positively support local development (para 16)
- Support the development of a strong, competitive economy through the provision of jobs and existing employment (Section 1)
- Support a prosperous rural economy (Section 3)
- Promote sustainable transport (Para 37)
- Ensure that development in the local area is of the expected quality and in keeping with local character (Para 58)
- Promote healthy communities by supporting the provision and safeguarding of communities spaces (Para 70)
- Manage and protect important open spaces and rights of way (Para 73 to 75)
- Seek to protect locally important open spaces by designating them as Local Green Space (Paras 76 to 78)
- Protect the Green Belt (Paras 79 to 92)
- Meet the challenges posed by climate change and flooding (Section 10)
- Conserve and enhance the natural environment (Paras 109 to 115)
- Conserve and enhance the historic environment (Paras 126 to 141)
- Ensure that the policies including in the neighbourhood plan support sustainable development that is both 'viable' and 'deliverable' (Para 173)

## 5.2 The National Planning Practice Guidance Suite (NPPG)

Published in March 2012, the NPPG is an online planning resource that was developed to help communities understand how the NPPF relates to their emerging neighbourhood plans and how national policy principles can be translated to support development at the very local level. It is a useful tool and the following references are of particular relevance to neighbourhood planning:

- What communities can use neighbourhood planning for (ID 41-002)
- What a neighbourhood plan should address (ID 41-004)
- The deliverability of a neighbourhood plan (ID 41-005)
- The evidence needed to support a neighbourhood plan (ID 41-040)
- The way in which neighbourhood plan policies should be drafted (ID 41-041)
- Infrastructure considerations (ID 41-045)
- The definition of 'general conformity' (ID 41-074)



- What is meant by 'strategic policies' (ID 41-075)
- The EU obligations (ID 41-078)
- The need for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (ID 11-028)
- How neighbourhood plans can use housing need guidance (ID 2a-007)
- Information on design (ID 26-031)
- The Local Green Space designation (ID 37-005 to ID 37-022)
- Assessing whether policies support development that is viable (ID 10-005 to ID 10-015)

### 5.3 The Colchester Sustainable Communities Strategy

This was produced in October 2007 following the collaboration of public, private and community interests via the Colchester Local Strategic Partnership. It sets out a long-term vision of the borough stating that by 2020 and beyond, Colchester will excel as a prestigious regional centre that is:

- an iconic destination for culture and learning nationally and internationally
- renowned for sustainable economic growth and therefore a place where everyone has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Its objectives cover issues relating to transport, heritage and culture, business and employment and life opportunities and relates to residents across the Borough as a whole.

### 5.4 The Colchester Local Development Plan

The Local Development Framework for Colchester comprises a series of documents that guide future development in the borough. It provides the primary means of delivering the spatial elements of Colchester's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Once the WBNP has passed both examination and local referendum it will form a section of the Colchester Local Development Plan and its policies will carry an equal weighting in planning decisions to those set out in the Borough's Core Strategy.

Colchester's current Core Strategy was adopted in 2008. In 2014, a Focused Review of a number of the policies within this was undertaken to ensure that they met the new framework as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. A Full Review is currently taking place with a new, updated Local Plan expected to be adopted in 2017.

The Core Strategy sets out the vision, objectives and strategic planning policies for the entire Borough until 2021. The WBNP will need to be prepared in general conformity with the strategic objectives of the Core Strategy of which there are eight relating to: Sustainable Development; Centres and Employment; Housing; Urban Renaissance; Public Realm; Transport and Accessibility; Environment and Rural Communities; and Energy, Resources, Waste, Water and Recycling. These are detailed in Appendix B. As the work on the neighbourhood plan progresses, it will be necessary to keep abreast of developments on the Full Review of the Core Strategy, to check that any keep policy changes are taken into account. There may also be scope to input into the emerging Core Strategy.

## 5.5 Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge which Colchester Borough Council intends to place on new developments to ensure that necessary infrastructure is provided alongside developments. Under the Neighbourhood Planning regulations of the 2011 Localism Act, areas with a Neighbourhood Plan in place will receive at least 25% of the CIL raised in their area to direct to their own local infrastructure priorities. Areas without a Neighbourhood Plan will receive a maximum of 15% of CIL subject to a limit cap.

Colchester Borough Council is currently undertaking viability and evidence work to determine at what level to set CIL but is proposing the following charges on new development : Residential - £120/m<sup>2</sup>; Retail (in town centres or less than 430m<sup>2</sup>) - £120/m<sup>2</sup>; Retail – out of centre or edge of centre - £240/m<sup>2</sup>; All other uses - £0.

The CIL charging schedule is likely to be in place later in 2015.

## 6. A Portrait of West Bergholt

Colchester's Local Plan sets out a hierarchy of settlements in the Borough with development prioritised to the most accessibly located. West Bergholt is classified as a village within this hierarchy and as such is unlikely to experience significant development during the plan period. Instead the emphasis being promoted from the Borough perspective are to protect local character and support the provision of affordable housing, open space, rural employment, key services and community facilities, based on local need.

The Neighbourhood Plan offers West Bergholt the opportunity to set out policies that will help deliver its aims across a range of areas, including those detailed by the Core Strategy. The Steering Group to date has focussed its efforts on the following topics: Social and community; Environment; Community safety; Community amenities; Business and Commerce; Sport and recreation; Communications; Housing and planning; Transport and highways.

This section will explore these topics in more details to understand, in relation to land-use and planning:

- The current situation in West Bergholt
- The views of the local community
- Key evidence informing future development in the neighbourhood area
- Core Strategy policies of relevance to West Bergholt
- Opportunities in terms of planning and land-use for the neighbourhood plan

Views of the local community represent the outcomes of engagement to date on both the Parish Plan (2009) and more recently the emerging neighbourhood plan consultations.

### 6.1 Business and commerce

#### The current situation

Historically the neighbourhood area has a largely agricultural heritage and this remains in many parts. As a small rural village, West Bergholt itself has a modest selection of convenience stores and services located primarily around the main roads of Colchester Road (B1508) and Chapel Road. This includes a couple of general stores, a small Co-op with Post Office and banking facilities and also a number of local pubs. For comparison shopping, the village is located very near to Colchester. The 2011 survey of businesses for the Village Design Statement identified 52 businesses within the village envelope.

In terms of the wider economy, a number of small scale business parks have developed in the following areas: Colchester Road, Nayland Road, Armoury Farm, Bourne Road and Fossetts Lane. These house independent businesses as well as offering some office space. There is a showground located along Nayland Road which is used for events such as the Historic Vehicle Show.

The 2011 census reveals that West Bergholt has a very low unemployment level. Of the residents aged between 16 and 74 (of which there are 2,392 in West Bergholt), 1,727 residents (72.2%) are economically active. Of these 76.4% were in employment and 16.7% were self-employed. 3.0% of residents are unemployed compared to 4.9% across the borough and 6.3% across England.

Of those economically active in the neighbourhood area, the key employment sectors are as follows: human health and social work, education, wholesale and retail trade, and construction, professional services and finance and insurance. The vast majority travel to work by car or van, followed by a significant number travelling by train. A great deal of those in employment work outside the neighbourhood area but still within the Borough boundary (The travel to work pattern for the Borough shows that 72.6% of residents work within the Borough itself).

There are numerous businesses being operated from resident's own homes. The 2011 census revealed that 4.7% of those residents classified as economically active in the neighbourhood area are working from home, which is higher than the 3.5% figure for the Borough as a whole.

### What is the view of the local community?

Key findings included:

- The village is well-served for shops for the local community needs although some residents find it difficult to access out of town supermarkets.
- Businesses feel that the number of shops in the centre of the village is too small to enable local commercial activities to thrive.
- A commitment locally to improve the range of shopping facilities, accessibility to specialist shops and improve facilities for small businesses, perhaps through the introduction of small business units.
- This expansion of commercial areas was tested again in the neighbourhood survey with a 36% in agreement, although the overall figures did not pinpoint an overwhelming shared opinion.
- There is a desire amongst locals for a community café/ meeting place in the village as well as a regular farmers' market.
- Pubs are at risk from closure without local support
- Business parks are at the limit of their current footprints
- Poor broadband speeds are a concern for local businesses.

### Supporting evidence

The Colchester Employment Land Needs Assessment (2015) assesses the needs of the Borough as a whole in terms of economic development over the period of the emerging Core Strategy. Data from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) indicates that the rural area currently accounts for 16% of employment opportunities in the Borough through the provision of employment space. This takes the form of purpose built stand-alone business parks, industrial estates and converted rural premises/barns. These sites accommodate a range of sectors and industries but generally B1 and light industrial uses.

Demand for rural employment space in Colchester Borough is reported to be steady, with continued growth of this type of premises considered inevitable to meet the needs of what is essentially a local

market consisting of rural businesses which operate in the area. These premises can also play an important role in providing affordable workspace and retaining home based businesses within the local community.

The growth and sustainability of employment space provision is largely linked to the accessibility of sites to the main strategic routes such as the A12 and also via the railway (freight and passengers). Many rural businesses face particular challenges to continued economic growth and prosperity, including poor infrastructure and access to facilities (such as high speed broadband), low density of firms leading to a poorer choice of local employment opportunities for rural residents, and limited access to affordable housing for employees in many areas.

The Colchester Employment Land Needs Assessment also suggests that it is important that strategic policy safeguards against any future downturns in traditional rural activities by encouraging the conversion and re-use of rural buildings for non-agricultural uses in order to grow and diversify the employment offer in Colchester's rural economy. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, it recommends a flexible approach to future proposals that could in fact result in the loss of employment land if that is deemed the preferred option.

Tourism is an important sector of the economy for the Borough as a whole, with the percentage of employees within the tourism industry having grown from 6% in 2001 to 10% in 2014. There may be opportunity for West Bergholt to take advantage of visitors to neighbouring Colchester capitalising on the town's own history.

The Atkins Employment Land Report (2007) reported that in 2003, West Bergholt (together with Eight Ash Green) had the following B Class Floorspace:

- 8 offices (1000 sq m)
- 14 factories/workshops (3,000 sq m)
- 10 warehouses (2000 sq m)
- TOTAL: 6000 sq m of B class floorspace

The report estimated that between 2004 and 2012, an additional 5,687 jobs would need to be created across the Borough, primarily in and around the larger centres, although a reduction in manufacturing very likely to take place. A total of 67.89 ha of land is suitable to come forward for employment development. Approximately 30 ha of employment land is required by 2012 to support the projected growth in employment.

For rural enterprises, key locations should be identified as firm allocations and mapped accordingly. These should be defined according to a comprehensive needs assessment. Whilst the rural enterprise locations should represent the areas where greatest need is demonstrated to exist, it is important that supporting policies do not exclude other rural areas from the development of employment and enterprise generating activities. The recommendation is to prioritise the re-use of existing buildings in the countryside and then specific criteria are laid out to determine need for development.

#### What does the Core Strategy say about business and commerce?

The policies of most relevance to West Bergholt are as follows:

#### **CE1 – Centres and Employment Classification and Hierarchy**

Previously developed land is prioritised for any new developments. Priority is also given to Centres (note West Bergholt is not classified as a 'Centre'). However, small-scale developments may be acceptable in residential or countryside locations if they have low travel needs and low impacts, for

example small shops and facilities for a local catchment, and rural businesses, recreation and tourism developments again to meet local needs and support rural economies.

### **CE2c – Local Centres**

The provision of local shops and services will be safeguarded to provide for the needs of local residents. Smaller centres provide predominantly for the local community. The viability of smaller centres will be supported and these areas will be protected against inappropriate development.

### **CE3 – Employment Zones**

Incubator units and grow-on space will be encouraged to support small and medium enterprises.

### Opportunities for the neighbourhood plan

The Steering Group has drafted the following Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan:

1. Seek to encourage controlled expansion of existing employment opportunities or new opportunities if scope exists; and
2. Maintain and promote existing offer of retail/eating/drinking facilities

Policies that might deliver these objectives include:

- Protection of existing commercial premises/land – to safeguard against change of use unless sites have proven uneconomically viable
- Provision of new employment – the allocation of land for employment, should it come up for development.
- Retention of small-scale employment in the village centre – to safeguard against change of use from retail to residential
- Implementation of high speed broadband – to ensure that all sites allocated for development must be served by fibre optic
- Identification of Assets of Community Value – to assemble list of local assets (buildings and land), which might include local enterprise, to safeguard against future loss
- Requesting three dimensional visualisations of proposed commercial development in situ to be able to assess impact

## **6.2 Housing**

### The current situation

West Bergholt parish is a desirable place to live due to the attractive surrounding countryside, the scale of the current settlements, and the proximity and ease of access to surrounding towns, employment and travel hubs. The area has a higher than borough-average number of older residents but also a higher than average number of younger children, those falling between the ages of 5 and 17 years old. This suggests that the area is a popular place for families to settle and also for those considering retirement. The lower than average number of those of working age in the area might reflect the fact that the village is positioned toward the higher end of the housing price scale with limited affordable housing options. ONS figures show that whilst the average house prices in the region have fallen in the last year, they are still higher than England average.

The overall population size of the neighbourhood area, according to the 2011 census is 3,344 persons, living in 1,364 houses as follows:

	Owned outright	Owned with mortgage	Privately rented	Social rented
West Bergholt	43.4%	40.4%	7.4%	8.2%

	Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Flats/maisonettes (entry level housing)
West Bergholt	55%	27.0%	9.2%	9%

	One person pensioner	Dependent children	Lone parent households
West Bergholt	12.5%	30.6%	4.2%

According to 2010 ONS data Colchester's population will increase by 31.6% by 2035 with a particular growth of those over 60 and over 90 years old. The effect of this growth means that according to the Interim 2011 ONS based household projections, there are predicted to be 12,000 (14.3%) more households in the Borough as a whole in 2012 than in 2011 and that household size will reduce in this timeframe from 2.41 to 2.28.

House prices remain relatively high in the Borough area: Over the five year period 2007 to 2012 the average house price in Colchester Borough has increased overall by 1.2% with detached properties showing an increase of 2.0%. Semi-detached properties have decreased on average by 2.8% and terraced by 4.2%. Prices in the rural areas of the borough remain higher than the larger settlements.

Historically development with the parish has taken place in the main within the village envelope (see diagram below). The Core Strategy has made provision for 50 additional dwellings in the neighbourhood area over the next 25 years. Over half of this new build has already taken place in many cases through infilling. The table in Appendix C details the sites allocated in West Bergholt as per the 2010 Site Allocations report including housing allocations based on the 2009 SHLAA update. Note that the SHLAA is currently being updated and a call for sites was issued in summer 2014.

In terms of design, West Bergholt Parish Council produced a Village Design Statement in 2011 which sets out guidance on new housing. This document holds the status of a supplementary planning document within the Colchester Local Plan. It includes 37 design guide policies covering areas such as types of buildings materials to be used, impact on views, scale of new build and details on garden and car parking provision.

West Bergholt's Village Appraisal notes that a number of modern housing developments have occurred in recent decades which has extended the boundary of the village to the south and west. A strategic green gap is required to ensure that the village and wider parish does not coalesce with Colchester.



**Village development envelope (in pink)**

### What is the view of the local community?

Key findings included:

- The neighbourhood plan survey illustrated that 67% wish to see no more than the minimum houses necessary.
- Residents are keen to preserve the character of West Bergholt.
- Residents wish to have a say in the quality, pace and location of development.
- Infilling was raised as a concern and greater controls on this were welcomed for example regarding the quantity and design quality. There was also concern about the potential impact of new housing on local infrastructure such as the school and transport services.
- The more recent neighbourhood plan survey went into more detail in terms of the types of housing development that local people would like to see. The majority (52%) mentioned starter/low cost homes for first time occupiers/young families, although there was a fairly equal spread of support for other development types (downsizing, sheltered housing, care homes and small, mixed group developments). Developer-proposed schemes were the least supported with only 4% of respondents keen on this category.
- A feeling that there is a shortfall in suitable housing types to enable older couples to downsize but remain within the neighbourhood area.

- Maintaining the village envelope was supported by 70% of respondents, although 28% felt that limited expansion might be allowable for specific purposes.
- 96% of respondents to the neighbourhood plan survey felt that local people must be able to influence the quality, pace and location of new development.

### Supporting evidence

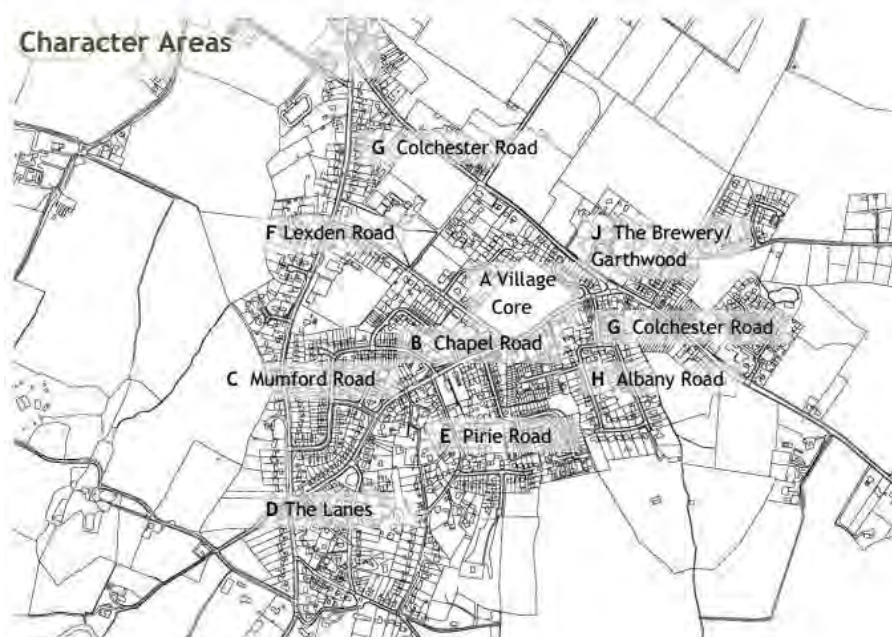
In the absence of a Housing Needs survey for West Bergholt itself, the Colchester's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014) provides an assessment of people's housing needs within the area based on statistical evidence and survey data. It breaks down the borough into 8 sub-areas which have each been analysed in terms of future housing need. West Bergholt falls within the 'Rural' category. The following characteristics are displayed for the rural area:

- Housing (both for sale and rental) is at the more expensive end of the scale in rural areas.
- New housing development should incorporate a mix of type and size to cater for all household types.
- The second most popular choice of location for those moving house within the Borough (33%)

In terms of future housing need, across the Borough, 32.9% of residents plan to move within one year and 36.8% in 1 to 2 years. The main type of property required is semi-detached with 46.5% seeking a 3 bedroom unit. The main reasons for choice of location for those moving into Colchester was 'quality of neighbourhood' followed by 'employment/closer to work' and 'type of housing'.

Affordable housing within developments is set in the Core Strategy at 20% with rural villages requiring affordable housing units on developments of over 5 dwellings. Colchester Borough Council have also produced supplementary guidance on the impact of developments on air quality and on Sustainable Construction.

The Essex Design Guide (2005) sets out county-wide criteria on design of new developments. West Bergholt published a Village Design Statement (VDS) in 2011 which adds further detail to developments that enable them to be in-keeping specifically in West Bergholt. It identifies nine character areas within the village (see map below) representing the eclectic mix of properties from the very old to the brand new.





The zones identified are:

A: Village Core (New Church Road, Lorkin Daniell Field, The school, The Heath and Poor's Land, the allotments, St Mary's)

B: Chapel Road (retail/commercial)

C: Mumford Road (C20th planned residential)

D: The 'Lanes' (Spring Lane, The Avenue, Bourne Road, Queen's Road, Chapel Lane, Valley View (organic residential)

E: Pirie Road, Valley Crescent (C20th planned residential)

F: Lexden Road (linear residential on village edge mainly individual houses)

G: Colchester Road (mixed residential on village edge)

H: Albany Road (mixed residential on village edge mainly individual properties) J The Brewery/Garthwood (planned development of 1980)

The village has 34 listed buildings (see map at Appendix C) including one Grade 1 listed building: the Church of St Mary in Hall Road. Other listed buildings of note are the Grade 2\* Cooks Hall and Horsepits Farmhouse, and the Grade 2 White Hart Public House. The Design Statement details 37 Design Guidance policies which have been adopted as supplementary planning guidance within the Local Plan and are regularly used by the Parish Council when commenting on planning applications.

The Haven Gateway Water Cycle Study – Stage 1 Report (2008) explores options “to ensure that water supply, water quality, sewerage and flood risk management issues can be properly addressed, thus enabling the substantial growth proposed in the East of England Plan (EEP) to 2021 to be accommodated in a sustainable way.” It found that some of the land suitable for development is located in Flood Risk Zone 2 and 3 although this relates primarily to land away from West Bergholt.

#### What does the Core Strategy say about housing?

The policies of most relevance to West Bergholt are as follows:

#### **H1 – Housing Delivery**

At least 19,000 new homes will be delivered across the Borough between 2001 to 2023, focused in the Town Centre and Growth Areas. At least 80% of this should be delivered on previously developed land. West Bergholt is earmarked for 50 additional homes.

#### **H2 – Housing Density**

As a less accessible, rural location, West Bergholt is suited to lower density of housing. The provision of open space, parking and a mix of housing will help to moderate density.

#### **H3 – Housing Diversity**

Housing should comprise a range of types and tenures. The exact diversity can be determined based on an appraisal of the community context and local housing need.

A need for affordable housing, and housing suitable for those with disabilities, special needs and older people is flagged.

#### **H4 – Affordable Housing**

20% of new dwellings should be provided as affordable housing. In villages, affordable housing will be required on housing developments of 5 or more dwellings.

Development of dwellings on rural exception sites that are contiguous with village settlement boundaries will be supported if a robust case is made for this.

#### **H5 – Rural Workers Dwellings**

New criteria set out to support new agricultural/rural workers dwellings as part of existing businesses.

## **UR2 – Built Design and Character**

High quality, inclusive design will be supported that is informed by the local context. Emphasis on creating people-friendly, safe, locally distinctive and accessible places. Assets that contribute positively to the character of the built environment will be protected from inappropriate development.

## **SD1 – Sustainable Development Locations**

Colchester Borough Council will promote sustainable development and regeneration to deliver at least 14,200 jobs between 2001 and 2021 and at least 19,000 homes between 2001 and 2023.

Development should take place at the most accessible and sustainable locations. West Bergholt is detailed as a 'Rural Community' in the Settlement Hierarchy and having 'low access' on the spatial diagrams. It is therefore not earmarked for major development in the future.

## **ER1 – Energy, Resources, Waste, Water and Recycling**

Commitment to carbon reduction through efficient use of resources, support for renewable energy projects, low-zero carbon homes and improved and increased recycling facilities.

### Opportunities for the neighbourhood plan

The Local Plan makes provision for 50 dwellings in West Bergholt and much of this has been delivered. The neighbourhood plan provides an opportunity to allocate sites for the remainder of this development as well as to expand the number of dwellings should local need support it.

The Steering Group has drafted the following Objective for the Neighbourhood Plan:

1. To support limited expansion in the parish and to contain this in the village through sympathetic changes to the village envelope and involve local community in all aspects of development through consultation and active involvement to determine the best form of new housing

Suggested options to deliver this are:

1. 50 houses to be accommodated within the existing village envelope
2. 50 to 100 houses to be accommodated by extending the village envelope sympathetically
3. 50 to 200 houses to be accommodated by new extensions to the village envelope

Policies that might deliver the objective include:

- Allocating specific sites for housing including the development of criteria to assess sites
- Setting criteria for infill housing and dwelling extensions
- Setting criteria for suitable housing mix for example to place an emphasis on smaller family housing and affordable housing.
- Raising the profile of design guidance contained in the Village Design Statement to protect local character
- Redefining the village envelope to enable limited development
- Setting minimum standards for private garden size on new dwellings
- Enabling extensions or change of use of dwellings to enable flexible or home-working

## 6.3 Transport and access

### The current situation

The village is located just to the north west of Colchester with good road link connections to the A12, Colchester town centre, the railway station, Tollgate Retail area and the rural hinterlands.

### **Road network and car parking**

The main B1508 road cuts across the village and is the main through-route for traffic along with Newbridge Hill/Lexdon Road. The local primary school is located off Church Road with paths accessing it from the surrounding roads.

All local roads are covered by 30mph restrictions and the potential to reduce this around the school, around the Co-op, the key through-roads and along Chapel Road have been discussed and features in the Parish Plan for West Bergholt. The parish has an active Speedwatch Group using handheld radar technology to monitor speeding hot-spots. Local concerns about traffic and transport issues feature highly in local engagement to date in particular: problems with speed and volume of traffic, risks to pedestrian and cyclist safety and car parking. In terms of car parking, pinch points in the village exist around the Co-op and the school.

The car park at Orpen Hall has recently been subject to resurfacing work and improvements such as new planting. The space offers 40 car parking spaces, a loading bay, 7 disabled spaces and parking for bicycles.

### **Buses**

Just 4% of residents in the neighbourhood area travel to work by bus. Buses are provided by two companies: Chambers run an hourly service to Colchester and Sudbury; and First Bus operate a 30 minute frequency peak and daytime service to the town centre. School buses serve the main secondary schools located in neighbouring towns and the Care Network and Community bus services offer a bookable service for those unable to access conventional public transport.

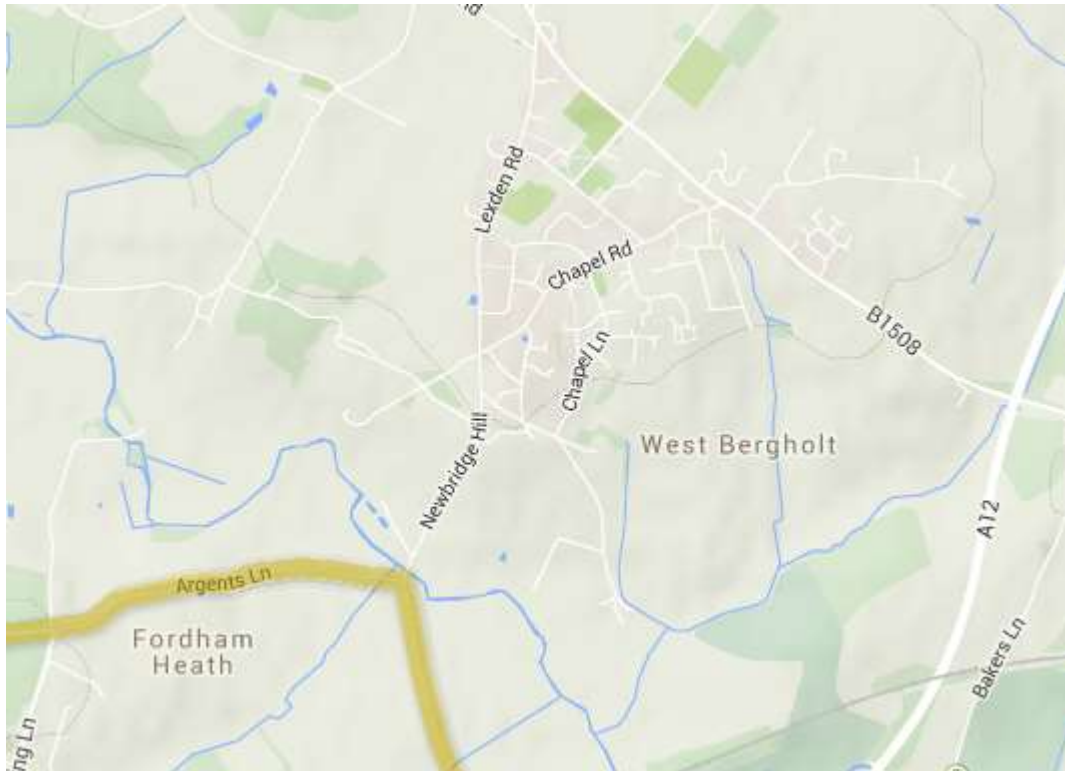
### **Rail**

The nearest railway station is located in Colchester on the Greater Anglia line serving Norwich and London Liverpool Street. 7% of those working travel to work by train.

### **Pedestrian and cycle movement**

Footpaths are well provided for in the village and are generally adjacent to the majority of roads. The Essex Way, an 82 mile long distance footpath cuts through the village of West Bergholt. There are a number of gaps in the right of way network in the village (for example Poors Land to the existing footpath on the Village Green) an issue which has been picked up in the engagement alongside concerns over maintenance and signage.

In terms of cycling, the village is just beyond the National Cycle Route 13 which, once complete, will link Tower Bridge in London to Fakenham in Norfolk. Routes 1 and A2 are just on the periphery of the neighbourhood area. Dedicated cycling routes within the village are limited although improvements to the Orpen Hall car park include cycle parking facilities.



**Route 13 National Cycling Route**

The area does not have a great number of bridleways although efforts are being made to extend the East Anglian Farm Rides scheme further around the area.

What is the view of the local community?

Key findings include:

- Traffic is a concern for residents. According to the Parish Plan Survey 70% of respondents were concerned about road safety, 85% about traffic speed, 71% about traffic volumes, 58% about parking, 48% about conditions for pedestrians and 53% about conditions for cyclists.
- The neighbourhood plan survey again found 72% of residents had concerns about the potential for traffic related accidents in the village and 63% agreed or strongly agreed that many of the roads should have a 20mph speed limit.
- Road maintenance was flagged as a concern for 74% of respondents.
- Safety around the school during peak times is a concern.
- The need for improved road connections for lorries accessing the A12.
- Parking around the Co-op appears to be a concern and the neighbourhood plan survey revealed that the majority of people would like to see parking restrictions at certain road junctions.
- Public transport appears to be well-used concerns exist about reliability, costs, and reducing services.
- Poor maintenance of highways is a concern.
- Walking opportunities are well provided for although information about the public rights of way is difficult to find and some footpaths have gaps.
- Cycling facilities – both routes and facilities – are felt to be inadequate.
- Concerns about the volume of traffic in New Church Road which is blocking the entrance to the allotment site.

## Supporting evidence

The Local Transport Plan (2011) details the strategic approach for transport in Essex. It sets out aspirations for improving travel in the county, demonstrating the importance of meeting these aspirations to achieving sustainable long-term economic growth in Essex and enriching the lives of the county's residents.

Key challenges facing the rural area in terms of transport are:

- Diminishing local service availability
- Rapidly ageing population, with increasing number of people without access to a car
- Encroachment of inappropriate traffic and inappropriate traffic speeds impacting on rural character

The plan's priorities for settlements in rural areas are as follows:

- Supporting the economy of our historic rural towns and villages, extensive coastline and varied countryside.
- Providing support for transport in rural areas to ensure that access is provided to employment, education, healthcare and food shopping
- Ensuring that people in rural areas are able to access important services (including shopping, healthcare, library facilities, etc.), without needing to travel long distances
- Minimising the impact transport has on the character of our rural areas

The A12 is heavily used by HGVs, with approximately 1,400 travelling on it in each direction every day (as estimated in the National Networks – London to Haven Ports Study, Department for Transport, 2010). HGVs using local routes within West Bergholt to access the main routes has been described as a concern among local residents. The Local Transport Plan seeks to ensure that HGVs use Priority 1 roads in the main to help minimize adverse impacts on local routes.

The Colchester Cycling Delivery Strategy (Supplementary Planning) promotes importance of new developments to plan from the outset to accommodate cycle infrastructure to create sustainable development. This includes the provision of cycling parking facilities and links to existing cycleways. It suggests that in terms of cycle provision, strategic cycling links will be funded by CIL (once it is introduced) while on-site provision and smaller projects, such as local links and crossings to a cycle network, would be funded by Section 106 contributions and obligations.

## What does the Core Strategy say about access?

The policies of most relevance to West Bergholt are as follows:

### **TA1 – Accessibility and Changing Travel Behaviour**

Developments that are car-dependent or promote unsustainable travel behaviour will not be supported.

Sustainable transport will be improved to provide better connections between the community and their needs.

### **TA2 – Walking and Cycling**

Walking and cycling opportunities will be actively promoted, including national cycle routes, facilities and infrastructure which enable better access locally and between centres and the countryside.

The river corridor provides a good opportunity for improved walking and cycling.

### **TA3 – Public Transport**

Focused on the Town Centre and Growth Areas, but improvements will impact positively on other areas too.

#### **TA4 – Roads and Traffic**

Again improvements focused on Town Centre, Growth Areas and strategic road network but benefits will be felt on the wider scale.

#### **TA5 – Parking**

Residents parking will be encouraged where there is high demand for on-street parking.  
Car clubs encouraged where limited parking supply exists.

#### **PR2 – People-friendly Streets**

Safe, people-friendly streets which encourage more walking, cycling, recreation and local shopping will be encouraged

#### Opportunities for the neighbourhood plan

The Steering Group has drafted the following Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan:

1. To maintain and improve existing accessibility by bus, walking and cycling
2. To improve maintenance of our highways and verges and introduce 20mph zones or streets

Suggested proposals are:

- Possible bus service proposals: Real time information on bus stops saying when the next bus will be; Some form of bus discount scheme linked to increased usage
- Possible motorised transport proposals: Parking restrictions at key road junctions and possibly one way streets; Progressively introduce 20mph streets; A parish register of road defects to discuss with the highway authority
- Possible cycling proposals: Links to cycle routes in the area towards the station and Eight Ash Green; A quiet circular cycle route for youngsters to learn cycle craft on
- Possible walking proposals: New footways along Chapel Lane and New Church Road; A path from the Orpen Hall car park, around the playing field, to Mumford Close; Promotional leaflet covering public rights of way and cycling

Policies that might deliver these objectives include:

- The neighbourhood plan could determine how Community Infrastructure Levy raised from developments is focused on measures that will deliver the objectives in this area – for example funding schemes that reduce traffic speeds and volumes, improving pavements and access for cyclists/pedestrians
- Improvements to enhance the rights of way network when new development is under construction.
- Protection of car parking, for example where developments will result in the loss of off-road parking spaces
- Requiring developers to demonstrate that proposals do not have an adverse impact on the local road network (for example generation of additional HGV/LGV traffic)
- Installation of electric/hybrid vehicle recharging points

## 6.4 Environment and open space

### The current situation

The West Bergholt neighbourhood area lies to the northwest of Colchester within a high quality environment comprising primarily farmland (arable) and woodland.

There are seven Local Wildlife Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation within the area which are protected within the local planning system. They are a 'material consideration' in the determination of planning applications, and this should ensure that there is a general presumption against development upon them.



Hillhouse Wood, roughly a 10 to 15 minute walk from the village, is owned by the Woodland Trust and is home to a variety of tree species. With two ponds a various streams, it contains a series of walking routes and footbridges created by volunteers and is known for its carpet of bluebells in spring.

The village also has a number of ponds including at Lexden Road, White Hart, Queens Road and Hall Road. Added to this are various green spaces and vegetation that provide a setting to enhance the built environment.

In terms of open spaces, the village benefits from a number of Open Space play areas:

- The Lorkin Daniell Field: provides a large expanse of grassed area adjacent to the Orpen Hall
- Poors Land: located between Heathlands Junior School and the Colchester Road
- The West Bergholt Sports Club: situated on the Lorkin Daniell field, with an all-weather games area comprising two tennis courts
- Pirie Road: open space and playground

The Parish Council owns over 80 allotment sites in in the village located on New Church Road and managed by The West Bergholt Allotment Holders Site Committee. According to the Committee, at the start of 2015, there were about five people waiting for allotment space in West Bergholt.

The village green at West Bergholt is located to the front of Heathlands School and is registered as such (VG 22) under the Commons Registration Act 1965.

Appendix D contains a map detailing open spaces within the village as well as tree preservation orders.

## What is the view of the local community?

Key findings include:

- 87% of residents feel that open spaces are very important to them and that access to these is good. The promotion of more multi-functional use of and accessibility to open space was a recommendation in the Parish Plan.
- The Neighbourhood Plan survey again revealed overwhelming support for the protection of open spaces and important landscape and wildlife areas.
- Views were divided however on the need for further public space in the village and/or wider parish area, with a slight slant towards a desire for more.

## Supporting evidence

The Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003) provides evidence about the nature and sensitivity of the natural landscape for the whole county. Across Essex 75% of land is farmed with agriculture providing the primary use of land in rural areas, and in the main cereal production as opposed to livestock farming.

Within the planning context it states that “attractive landscape settings, where a strong sense of place and local distinctiveness is maintained and enhanced, are essential to economic and social development and prosperity. Balancing the demand for land for housing, economic activity, transport infrastructure and recreation with the long-term sustainable maintenance of natural resources, including landscape character, is a key role of the planning system.”

The study divides the county into its different landscape characters. Much of the West Bergholt neighbourhood area, including the village itself, falls within the Colne Valley landscape area marked by the river itself and its tributaries. The narrow valley sits largely on clay with loamy soils and is predominantly arable with a series of small towns and villages at bridging points of the river, some of which have expanded over the years since the expansion of the railway. Urban development pressures within this area are likely to remain high and potentially difficult to integrate given the small scale character of the valley and the effects that development would have on the views across the Colne River.

In terms of sensitivity, major urban extensions and new settlements, major transportation developments and mineral extraction/waste disposal are detailed as unlikely to be capable of being absorbed and the recommendation is a presumption against development unless overriding need. Small urban extensions (<5 ha), incremental small scale developments, utilities development and large scale ‘open uses’ may be capable of being absorbed and the recommendation is that developments should be considered on their individual merits.

For West Bergholt, given its position overlooking the valley, it is likely that any development that would cause a negative impact on the valley sides or result in loss of traditional hedgerows, small woodlands and copses, or other landscape features would be resisted.

West Bergholt’s Village Design Statement adds additional detail to this county-wide landscape assessment, suggesting that hedgerow loss has occurred over the years (in line with this area as a whole) but where these remain, especially along the lanes, and coupled with occasional small mixed woodlands, it gives the setting of West Bergholt a surprisingly woody feel, especially when viewed across the valley from the lanes to Chitts Hill, Fordham Heath and Eight Ash Green. The views are more suburban when seen across the A12 from Braiswick, and when walking on public rights of way close to the village itself. - The condition of the landscape (hedgerow network, small woodlands etc.) is generally moderately good.



The Village Design Statement includes design guidance deterring “any development that would cause a negative impact on the valley sides” (DG1).

The remainder of the neighbourhood plan area falls within the North Colchester Farmlands landscape area. This flatter landscape comprises in the main arable land and small wooded areas with some smaller hamlets and smallholdings. Many of the latter have declined over the years and has led to other uses being sought for these small developments. This area is classified as being slightly less sensitive to development than the Colne Valley landscape area due to its flatter, more open nature. The West Bergholt Village Design Statement seeks to protect the rural character of this area through its policy DG2: Remaining hedgerows, native trees and small copses should be retained in the landscape.

The Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2005) mentions the following historic features in relation to West Bergholt: West Bergholt Hall (Georgian Town House), Church of St Mary (with early 14<sup>th</sup> century features), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC): alder carr woodland and West Bergholt heath. (note: the Village Appraisal notes seven SINC in total) It expresses concern about pressure from urban expansions and recommends that any development at West Bergholt is of an appropriate scale, form and design and uses materials which respond to historic settlement pattern, landscape setting and locally distinctive building styles and materials. It also recommends conserving and managing existing hedgerows, and restoring former ones where possible.

The Colchester Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011) details the existing green assets in the Borough dividing them into seven zones. “Great Horkesley and West Bergholt” is an Historic Environment Character Area which falls into three of the seven zones (Zone 1 - Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley; Zone 2 – Northern Farmland and Zone 3 – Colne River Valley) and presents the following opportunities and considerations:

- Potential for heathland restoration and heathland creation to link remnant areas of heathland (and also for orchard creation to reinstate aspects of historic landscape character) through take up of agri-environment schemes.
- Interpretation of significant aspects of the historic environment accessible from the green infrastructure network.
- Potential to link communities to high quality produce given the significant allotment/community gardens in West Bergholt
- The need to conserve the open character of the floodplain (in particular to support drainage) and maintain cross valley views by ensuring that any development in West Bergholt is of an appropriate nature and scale to avoid detrimental impacts on the landscape character of the area.
- Potential to improve links between West Bergholt and Colchester Town to encourage modal shift and reduce congestion in the latter.
- Potential to improve sustainable water resource management and adapt to climate change.
- Enhance and integrate cultural heritage assets into recreational and open spaces that provide a range of functions.
- Extend Fordham Community Woodland to West Bergholt.

With regards flood risk, the Colchester Flood Risk Assessment (2007) exists to assess potential flood risk at the local level in order to inform future development proposals. It highlights the Environment Agency’s advice on Flood Zones as defined within National Planning Policy Guidance. The key areas at risk of flooding within the neighbourhood plan area are along the Colne River and subsidiaries. Here the risk is defined as either Flood Zone 2 (land assessed as having between a 1 in 100 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding (1% – 0.1%), or between a 1 in 200 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability of sea

flooding (0.5% – 0.1%) in any year) or Flood Zone 3 (land assessed as having a 1 in 100 or greater annual probability of river flooding (>1%), or a 1 in 200 or greater annual probability of flooding from the sea (>0.5%) in any year).

### What does the Core Strategy say about business and commerce?

The policies of most relevance to West Bergholt are as follows:

#### **PR1 – Open Spaces and Recreation Facilities**

All residents should have access to open space within walking distance from their home. Developments should be informed by an appraisal of the local context and community need. All new homes should have access to private or communal open space.

#### **ENV1 – Environment**

The natural and historic environment will be conserved and enhanced. This includes the network of green links between the rural hinterland, river corridors, key green spaces and areas of accessible open space.

Development will be directed away from land at risk of flooding.

Development will be controlled outside existing settlement boundaries to protect open stretches of countryside around and between existing settlements to prevent coalescence and retain settlement identity.

Detailed policies on design and enhancement to be included in Development Policies DPD.

#### **ENV2 – Rural Communities**

The vitality of rural communities will be enhanced with appropriate development directed to infill and previously developed land within existing settlement boundaries. Design should be of high quality and in-keeping with existing village-scape.

Any development should demonstrate how it contributes to the local community in terms of affordable housing provision, open space, local employment opportunities and community facilities.

Development outside the settlement boundary can take place only if exceptional need is demonstrated for affordable housing and it is contiguous to the settlement.

Neighbourhood Plans will be supported as will Parish and Community Plans and Village Design Statements, all of which can be adopted as guidance.

### Opportunities for the neighbourhood plan

The Steering Group has drafted the following Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan:

1. To maintain the distinctiveness of the Parish and its identity by protecting the natural and built environment for the enjoyment of future generations
2. To explore opportunities to create new areas of open space

Suggested proposals are:

- Policies to protect what we have (including existing areas of public open space, woods in private ownership, special landscape areas to the south east of the village)
- Policies to improve what we have (e.g. additional footpaths or the need for further areas of open space?)
- Policies to ensure new developments enhance the environment

Policies that might deliver these objectives include:

- Raising the profile of design guidance contained in the Village Design Statement to protect local landscape character
- Detailing specific green spaces to be earmarked for protection, through for example a Local Green Designation
- Allocating sites for new green spaces
- Use of CIL contributions to fund schemes that deliver the objective for open spaces and environment
- Retention of hedges to conserve rural character

## 6.5 Community, health and Well-being

### The current situation

West Bergholt has an active community with pre- and primary education, a variety of social and leisure facilities, village green/open space, a good range of sporting and social groups, active church groups and three pubs, all which contribute greatly to the local quality of life.

In terms of education, a number of toddler groups operate in the village in addition to a pre-school. Healthlands Primary School is located centrally in the village catering for children up to Year 6. It is a larger-than-average primary school with 398 pupils and was rated as Good in its most recent Ofsted report. The school runs an after-school club.

There are no secondary schools in West Bergholt although the Colchester District has ten schools within reach of West Bergholt. Many are served by the dedicated school bus service. The schools are:

- Colchester County High School for Girls
- Colchester Royal Grammar
- The Gilberd
- The Philip Morant School and College
- St Benedict's College
- St Helena
- Sir Charles Lucas Arts College
- The Stanway
- The Thomas, Lord Audley School
- Language College, Thurstable

West Bergholt has one GP surgery, which receives high ratings from users for performance in all areas, and a pharmacy which is located along Chapel Road. The nearest hospitals are located in Colchester – Colchester General (with A&E) and The Essex County Hospital. Opticians and dentists are accessed in Colchester. A local Care Network is operated by volunteers and provides assistance to those in need, providing transport to medical appointments or other local visits.

There are three church groups in the village – St Mary the Virgin Church of England Church, the Methodist Church, and The Fellowship Pentecostal Church (which meets at the Orpen Hall). Each run a variety of social activities and events open to the whole community.

There are numerous leisure facilities available in West Bergholt, including tennis courts, football pitches and play areas, and organized community groups to make use of these.

## What is the view of the local community?

Key findings include:

- The Parish Plan Survey revealed that 87% of residents were content with existing recreation and leisure provision. This is backed up in the more recent neighbourhood plan survey.
- 64% of the younger residents expressed great dissatisfaction about the lack of a permanent Youth Club.
- 46% of younger residents also felt that there are no safe formal meeting places in the village.
- Provision of additional recreational activities generally would be welcomed and the younger residents in particular noted the potential to increase the use of the Multi Use Games Area. The Neighbourhood Plan survey backed this up with 49% calling for enhanced provision of activities for young people in the village and 49% agreeing that provision of recreational facilities for teenagers is limited.
- Interestingly, 71% of those responding to the neighbourhood plan survey were not regular users of the playing fields, tennis courts or childrens' play areas.
- There are three formal play areas in the village and the Parish Plan survey found that 80% of residents felt these were good or very good. Specific comments about the need for a fence on the Lorkin Daniel field and for better maintenance of the Pirie Road play area.
- The Parish Plan survey found that 95% of residents feel safe in the village with over half of respondents belonging to a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. This was mirrored in the more recent neighbourhood plan survey which found a call for the reintroduction of lapsed neighbourhood watch schemes.
- In terms of health facilities, the Parish Plan survey found that 93% of residents felt that access to doctors and chemists was not a concern. 14% suggested however that access to the nearest hospital was not very easy.
- Lack of access to adequate broadband was mentioned by a number of residents.
- The neighbourhood plan survey asked residents if they would welcome a new or expanded village hall with modern facilities. 37% strongly agreed or agreed, 36% were not sure, and 27% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

## Supporting evidence

Essex County Council are responsible for education policy and provision in the area. Their report, Commissioning School Places in Essex 2013-2018, sets out the likely need for school places based on population projections. For Colchester Borough the document states that there will be considerable housing development in the Colchester area over the period of the Plan and beyond due to both development of new housing and increased birth rates. Officers are working closely with Colchester Borough Council and developers to ensure that educational priorities can be met. Contributions are being sought from housing developers towards the cost of providing the additional places required for the pupils that will be generated by this new housing.

The statistics for West Bergholt illustrate the following:

Heathlands Primary School:

Net Capacity 2012/13	410 pupils
Number on roll May 2013	378 pupils (surplus of 32 places)
Forecast 2017/18	417 pupils (deficit of 1 place)
Forecast adjusting for new housing	418 pupils (deficit of 2 spaces)

The document suggests that as new housing developments progress there is likely to be pressure on school places and plans will be developed with the local schools to increase provision in the locality.

In terms of secondary education there are no secondary schools in West Bergholt. Again pressures associated with new housing is likely to impact on provision of spaces and a strategic plan for expansion of secondary school provision is being rolled out in Colchester.

Access to Primary Care in Essex – GPs, dentists, opticians, pharmacists – is currently being redesigned. A discussion document was issued in 2014 expressing the desire to move towards a ‘hub’ model, locating services collectively where possible and enabling a more joined-up approach to delivery. This is in response to a series of changes that are likely to impact on the primary care service, namely advancements in medical technology, tightening of budgets, an ageing society, increasing population size and rising consumer expectations. Research undertaken and included in the document suggests that Essex already has one of the lowest concentrations of GPs per resident in the country. In order to reach the England average, there is a need to attract and retain another 143 full-time GPs. A recent mystery shopper survey showed that in a quarter of practices, people wait two weeks to see a GP.

What does the Core Strategy say about business and commerce?

### **SD2 – Delivering Facilities and Infrastructure**

Any new development will need to provide support infrastructure (including community facilities, open space, transport), funding either through Section 106 or Community Infrastructure Levy. There is a keenness to reduce the over-reliance on private vehicles for transportation.

### **SD3 – Community Facilities**

Facilities will be provided where community need can be proved, with particular regard given to disadvantaged groups. In the main community facilities should be located in ‘centres’ or ‘accessible’ locations.

### Opportunities for the neighbourhood plan

The Steering Group has drafted the following Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan:

- To improve and extend opportunities for people of all ages to take part in a wide range of activities and volunteering and promote and raise awareness of these
- To increase participation as part of building a community support network

Suggested proposals are (although not all land-use related):

- Create a means of identifying when an organisation is struggling for support
- Create a database or contact list of people such that a growing pool of volunteers can be created
- Co-ordination of meeting venues to enable groups to meet easily
- Further opportunities for older children and young adults
- More publicity for existing groups
- Examine funding opportunity
- Create a community centre or similar

Policies that might deliver these objectives include:

- Allocation of new sites/ expansion of existing sites to deliver new facilities, such as a community or youth centre

- Allocation of sites for youth leisure facilities
- CIL could be made available to enable the school to be in a position to be able to take on additional pupils
- Developing a list of local assets of community value to submit to the formal register held by Colchester Borough Council

## **7. Conclusions and towards a Neighbourhood Plan**

As a largely rural area there is a strong feeling among local people about the need to protect the character and distinctiveness of the village as well as the landscape around it. The village predominantly serves the needs of local people and as such development on a larger scale is likely to be limited to the provision of facilities where there is a proven local need. The population of the neighbourhood area comprises larger than average numbers of both older residents and younger residents which may have an impact on the types of facilities required locally. Almost half of those living in the village travel to work by car, often commuting out to nearby larger towns as well as the railway to access London. This puts pressure on the road system and may give rise to a need to consider what could be done to encourage small-scale employment opportunities or home-working. A modest amount of housing has been set aside for West Bergholt and the residents will need to think carefully about how this is managed given the desire to limit the extension of the current village development envelope and reduce the amount of infilling and the need for affordable housing and housing that suits particular local needs.

The information provided in this document begins to highlight a series of opportunities that might be picked up via the emerging neighbourhood plan. Some stem from the direction set at the Borough level through the strategic policies for the area as a whole, while others stem from local community aspirations for the village going forward.

Potential opportunities are:

- Policies relating to future housing development including allocation of land for small scale build and providing local guidelines on infilling
- Site specific policies to promote and control future changes of use and development schemes
- Policies relating to employment including allocation of land and/or policies providing guidelines on appropriate scale and nature of development
- Shaping decisions on future leisure and community facilities provision and their location in the neighbourhood area
- Development of a village centre plan
- Establishing a green infrastructure plan to improve people and habitat connectivity within, through and around the village and neighbourhood area and to protect (and suggest new) important green spaces including trees and hedgerows
- Develop a recognised list of assets of community value
- Raising the profile and legal standing of guidelines specified in the Village Design Statement

A useful next step would be to decide on the focus for the plan and to develop an overall vision and options to test with the local community and which will form the basis of plan going forward.

## APPENDIX A – West Bergholt – a neighbourhood snapshot

Figures based on 2011 census

Key Facts	West Bergholt
Area:	1034 ha
Total population:	3,344
Population Density:	Not specified in census – Colchester is 5.3 persons per hectare compared to 3.1 across the East of England
Households:	1,364

### Population

West Bergholt is located in Colchester Borough within the county of Essex. The overall population size of the parish, according to the 2011 census is 3,344 persons or 1.93% of the local authority area, living in 1,364 households. The population of Colchester Borough area is 173,074.

### Age

The parish has a large older population compared with both the borough as a whole and the East of England. In addition it has a slightly larger population of those aged between 5 and 17 years. The population of working age (16 to 64) is lower than the average for the borough and region.

Early years: 4.78% (160 children) of the population are aged 0-4. This compares with 6.15% at the borough level.

School age: 17.17% (574 children) of the population are aged 5 to 17. This compares with 14.52% at borough level.

Working age: In terms of age profile, just over 60% (2025 residents) of the population in the parish is of working age between 16 and 64 compared to 65.94% at the borough level and 63.52% across the East of England.

Retirement age: 20.2% (675 people) of the population are aged 65 and over. This compares with 15.8% at the borough level and 17.5% regionally. Over 85 year olds account for 2.2% of the population mirroring the borough and East of England figures.

	Early years 0 to 4	School age 5 to 17	Working age 16 to 64	Retired 65 +	85 +
<b>West Bergholt</b>	4.8%	17.2%	60.6%	20.2%	2.2%
<b>Colchester Borough</b>	6.2%	14.5%	65.9%	15.8%	2.2%
<b>East of England</b>	6.2%	15.3%	63.5%	17.5%	2.4%
<b>England</b>	6.26%	15.13%	64.76%	16.34%	2.23%

## **Gender**

In terms of gender, 49% of West Bergholt's residents are male and 51% female, reflective of the statistics for the borough as a whole.

## **Deprivation levels**

The English Indices of Deprivation 2010 measure relative levels of deprivation in small areas of England called Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Out of the 32,482 wards in England, West Bergholt is ranked 32,169 making it the least deprived part of Colchester and one of the least deprived wards nationally.

## **Diversity**

In the 2011 census, 95.7% of people in West Bergholt said they were White British/other, higher than the borough profile of 87.5%.

When asked their religion the majority, 67.1 (2244 people), identified themselves as being Christian while 24% stated that they have no religion.

The census showed that 30 people in West Bergholt do not speak English as their main language, although none suggested that they did not speak English well.

## **Car ownership**

The 2011 census showed that 163 households (12%) do not own a car and subsequently are reliant on other forms of transport such as public transport services. This is somewhat lower than the borough percentage which is 20.6% without access to a car and a lot lower than the national (25.8% with no access to a car). In total 1364 cars are owned by households in the parish area, with most households owning 1 to 2 cars.

## **Health and wellbeing**

The 2011 Census asked three questions relating to health and the provision of unpaid care. The questions relate to whether people felt their general health was good, whether they looked after or gave help or support to other family members, friends, neighbours or others, and lastly whether their day to day activities were limited because of a health problem or disability.

At the time of the 2011 census 85% of people in West Bergholt said they felt they were in "good" or "very good health", comparable to the borough as a whole. 3.8% reported they were in "bad" or "very bad health" compared to 4.3% across the borough.

## **Provision of unpaid care**

The question asked "Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of either; a long term physical or mental illness health/disability? Or because of problems related to old age?" (note that the Census data does not differentiate between the two reasons offered).

At the time of the census 10.16% said that they were providing 1 to 19 hours of unpaid care a week compared with 8.28% at the borough level.

1.36% said they provided between 20 and 49 hours of unpaid care per week compared with 1.26% at the borough level.

2.53% said they provided over 50 hours of unpaid care compared with 1.41 % at the borough level and 2.26% for England and Wales.



### Long term illness and disability

The census asked “are your day to day activities limited a lot due to a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?”

6.1% said that their day to day activities are limited a lot due to a health problem or disability. The borough figure is 7%.

The percentage who reported their day to day activities were limited a little was 9.3%. The borough figure is 8.8%.

### **Housing data**

There were 1,364 households in West Bergholt at the time of the 2011 census (1.9% of the 71,634 households across the borough)

The majority of houses (1143 houses) were owner occupied (84.0%) compared to 66.3% across the borough area. 43.4% of the housed in West Bergholt are owned outright and 40.4% are owned with a mortgage or a loan.

There are 101 households (7.4%) that are classified as privately rented. This is lower than the 18.7% figure for the borough.

112 (8.2%) households are rented social housing from the council or ‘other’ sources. This is less than the borough figure of 13.5%.

In the neighbourhood area there are 749 detached dwellings representing 55% of all dwellings in the parish. There are also 367 semi-detached and 126 terraced dwellings equating to 27.0% and 9.2% respectively. Flats, maisonettes or apartments comprise 9% of all households (122 households), much lower than the 19% borough percentage.

12.5% of the dwellings are one person pensioner households, mirroring the borough wide figure.

30.6% of households in the neighbourhood area have dependent children compared to 29.1% across the borough. There are 57 lone parent households (with dependent children) which equates to 4.2% of all households, compared to 6.8% for the borough.

	<b>Number of households</b>	<b>Total one person households (over 65)</b>	<b>Total households with dependent children</b>	<b>Lone parent households with dependent children</b>
<b>West Bergholt</b>	1,364	12.5%	30.6%	4.2%
<b>Colchester Borough</b>	71,634	11.4%	29.1%	6.8%

## **Employment and labour market**

### Employment

Of the residents aged between 16 and 74 (of which there are 2,392 in West Bergholt), 1,727 residents (72.2%) are economically active. Of these 76.4% were in employment and 16.7% were self-employed. 3.0% of residents are unemployed compared to 4.9% across the borough and 6.3% across England.

### Labour force

72.2% of residents are economically active (classified as aged between 16 and 74).

Of those aged over 16, 17% of the population of the neighbourhood has a degree compared with 16.1% in the borough and 17.38% in England.

The number with no formal qualifications at all stands at 447 people, or 16.6%, slightly less than the borough (19.4%) and England as a whole (22.5%).

### Travel to work

Of those aged 16 to 74, 4.7% work from home compared to 3.5% at borough level.

The car is used as the main means of travel to work for 48.6% (the borough figure is 41.8%), while 10.5% use public transport (the borough figure is 9.1%) and 3.2% travel on foot (the borough figure is 8.4%).

## **APPENDIX B – Colchester Borough Core Strategy Strategic Objectives**

### **Sustainable Development**

The Strategy establishes a Settlement Hierarchy to guide development towards the most sustainable locations. These development locations will be coordinated with transport infrastructure and the provision of community facilities, shopping, employment and open space to create sustainable communities.

The Core Strategy seeks to provide excellent health, education, culture and leisure facilities to meet the needs of Colchester's growing community. Major community facilities (including the University of Essex and the Colchester General Hospital) will form key components of the growth areas and will be better connected by Transit Corridors. The Strategy also seeks to deliver new community facilities, including the Firstsite Building and Community Stadium.

### **Centres and Employment**

Achieving a prestigious regional centre and sustainable communities requires the enhancement of our Town Centre as well as other local centres. The Core Strategy establishes a hierarchy that secures the important role of the Town Centre and encourages the regeneration of Urban Gateways to Colchester (e.g. North Station). The Core Strategy also promotes the enhancement of District and Local Centres to support communities with local employment, shops and services.

Strategic Employment Zones have also been identified to accommodate business development at locations to the north, east and west of Colchester Town that are well supported with infrastructure.

### **Housing**

Colchester Borough needs to accommodate a minimum of 17,100 new homes between 2001 and 2021, and at least an additional 1,710 homes by 2023. Over two-thirds of this housing is already accounted for through existing allocations, permissions and completions. In broad terms, the majority of housing development in the Borough will be accommodated at the following locations:

- Town Centre (2000)
- North Growth Area (6200, including 2200 greenfield allocations)
- East Growth Area (2600)
- South Growth Area (3000)
- Stanway Growth Area (1800, including 800 greenfield allocations)

Housing developments will need to provide 35% affordable housing and provide a mixed of housing to meet the diverse needs of the community.

### **Urban Renaissance**

The Core Strategy seeks to maximise the potential of the existing regeneration areas and stimulate a broader urban renaissance throughout the Town Centre. To help deliver this urban renaissance tourism will be supported and promoted. The Core Strategy also seeks to protect the historic character of the Borough whilst securing high standards of urban design in new developments.

### **Public Realm**

Creating a high quality public realm, including parks, squares and streets, is integral to the success of sustainable communities, and is therefore a key element of the Core Strategy.

The Strategy seeks to improve the street environment and calm traffic in urban areas to attract residents to local shops, schools, parks and bus stops. Existing parkland and green links will be enhanced, and new open space will be acquired at appropriate locations, to meet the recreational needs of Colchester's growing community.

### **Transport and Accessibility**

The key aims of the transport strategy and policies are to improve accessibility and promote sustainable travel behaviour. Improved access to shops, employment and services can be achieved through a long-term strategy of coordinating land use and transport. The Strategy seeks to coordinate the following elements in order to improve accessibility and create sustainable communities:

- Support development at accessible locations to reduce the need to travel.
- Create people-friendly streets and encourage walking and cycling.
- Improve the public transport network with Transit Corridors, Park and Ride, and quality gateways/interchanges.
- Improve the strategic road network and manage car traffic and parking in urban areas.
- Support rural communities with demand responsive transport services.
- Travel planning and improved public information

### **Environment and Rural Communities**

The natural and historic environment, countryside and coastline will be conserved to protect the Borough's diverse history, archaeology, geology, and biodiversity. Development will be directed away from sites of landscape and conservation importance and land at risk from flooding. The unique character of Colchester villages will be protected, with only limited development supported to meet identified needs for local employment, affordable housing and community facilities. Tourism that is appropriate to the local environment and context will be supported and promoted.

### **Energy, Resources, Waste, Water and Recycling**

Establishing sustainable communities in Colchester requires careful management of our energy, resources and waste. The Strategy will promote environmentally sustainable developments that are designed to:

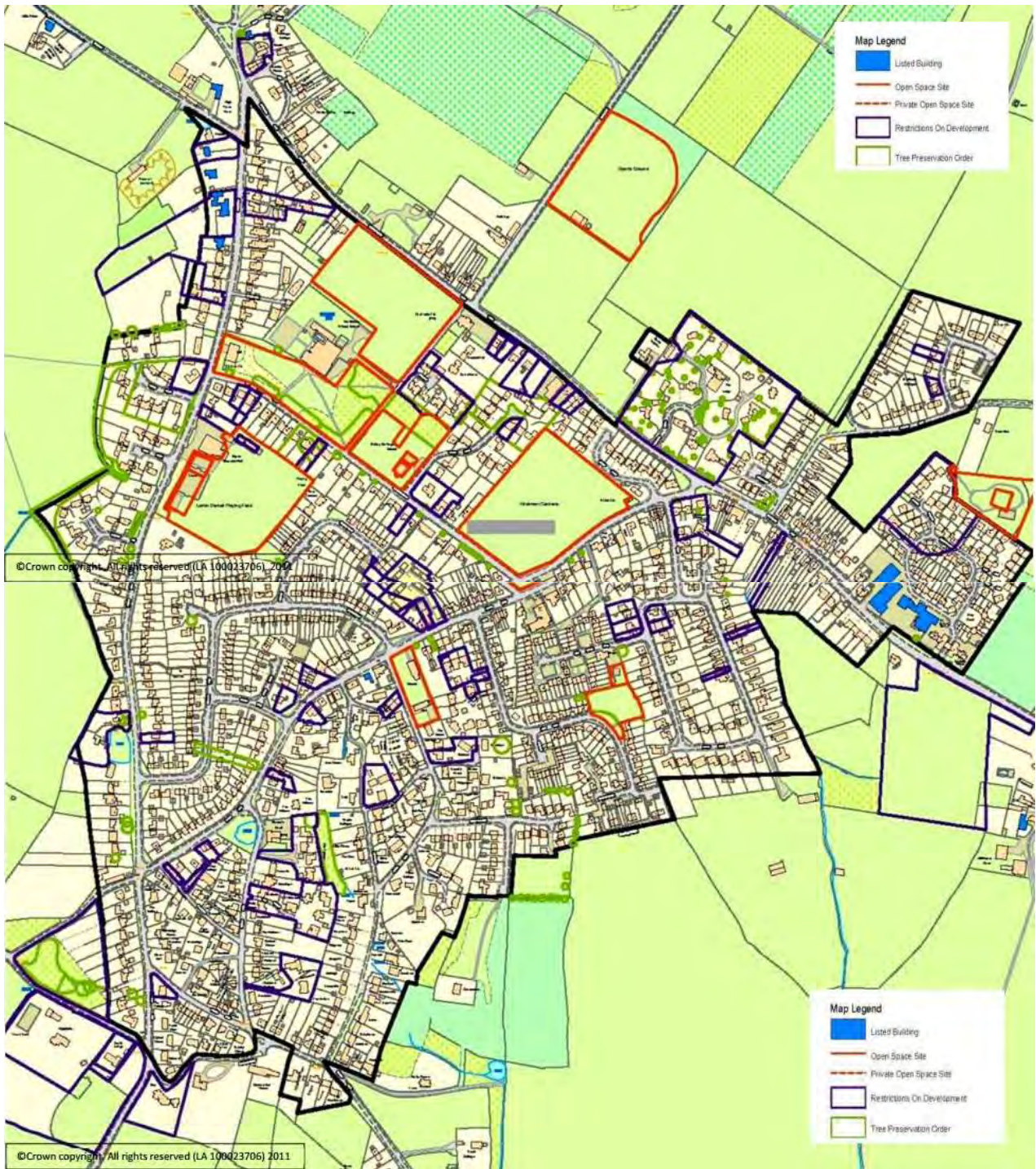
- Utilise renewable energy sources.
- Reduce household energy and water consumption.
- Encourage the recycling of waste.

## APPENDIX C – Site Allocations – West Bergholt

The following table details the sites allocated in West Bergholt as per the 2010 Site Allocations report including housing allocations based on the 2009 SHLAA update. Note that the SHLAA is currently being updated and a call for sites was issued in summer 2014.

Location	Type	Detail
Pattens Yard, Nayland Road, West Bergholt, 0.43 ha	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New allocation – to be limited to the lawful use of the site</li> <li>• Site should be well screened to reduce the impact on the landscape</li> <li>• Landscaping, including improved hard surfacing, required as part of any redevelopment</li> <li>• There is a population of great crested newts close to the site; an ecological survey will be required as part of any future proposals for the site</li> </ul>
68 and 70 Chapel Rd (2010/11)	Housing	8 dwellings (planning granted)

# APPENDIX D – Village Design Statement Maps



## **APPENDIX E - Sources of Evidence**

- National Planning Policy Statement (2012)
- National Planning Practice Guidance Suite (2012)
- National Census (2011)
- Colchester Economic Strategy (2010-2015)
- Community Strategy for Colchester Borough (2008)
- Colchester Borough Local Plan (adopted 2010)
- Colchester Employment Land Needs Assessment (2015)
- Colchester Borough Air Quality Planning Guidance Note (2012)
- Atkins Colchester Employment Land Study (2007)
- The Essex Design Guide (2005)
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2014)
- Colchester Housing Strategy (2008)
- Commissioning School Places in Essex (2013-2018)
- Essex Transport Strategy (2011)
- Essex Landscape Character Assessment (2003)
- Colchester Cycling Delivery Strategy (2012)
- Mid Essex Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2007)
- Colchester Borough Green Infrastructure Strategy (2011)
- Haven Gateway Water Cycle Study – Stage 1 Report (2008)
- Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2005)
- Landscape Capacity of Settlement Fringes in Colchester Borough (2005)
- Local Wildlife Site Review, Colchester Borough Council (2008)
- Rural Community Profile for West Bergholt (2013)
- The English Indices of Deprivation 2010 - Colchester Report (2010)
- Local Development Framework Site Allocations (2010)
- Transforming Primary Care in Essex (2014)
- West Bergholt Village Appraisal (1995)
- West Bergholt Village Design Statement (2011)
- West Bergholt Future - Parish Plan (2009)