

Local Plan Review Preferred Options 2025

Statement on behalf of the Parish Councils west of Colchester, Aldham, Chappel, Copford with Easthorpe, Eight Ash Green, Gt Tey, Marks Tey & Wakes Colne

The City Council's Preferred Options proposes housing allocations across the seven parishes on the west side of Colchester that are likely to result in a doubling of the population over the fifteen years to 2041. A number of the allocations cross parish boundaries - PP32 (Eight Ash Green & Aldham), PP18 (Marks Tey, Gt Tey & Aldham), PP17 (Marks Tey & Copford). Furthermore, the seven parishes share common concerns and all are impacted by the allocation of Marks Tey as a future Growth Area, traffic issues on the A12, A120 and A1124, access to Marks Tey station, and the impact of any future allocations in the forthcoming Review of the Braintree Local Plan to the west.

Each Parish has made its own representations to the Preferred Options but we believe there is a significant benefit if we can engage positively with the City Council also as a combined Group over the next six months, to refine and shape the Reg.19 Draft before it is published. The objective is to help produce a Local Plan that can effectively deliver the right development, in the right location, at the right time, with the necessary infrastructure and mitigation for our communities.

We recognise the City Council is not in a position to reduce the total number of new homes it has to plan for because of Government policy. However, it is important for our communities that we do our utmost to ensure firstly; that any new development is in the best location, secondly; that it is strategically planned within an overall growth strategy, and thirdly; that the policies are in place to secure the right infrastructure is delivered where and when it is needed. We do not believe the Preferred Options achieve any of these objectives in its present form. It leaves the burden of design and proof on individual isolated developments across the seven parishes with the risk of speculative, piecemeal and premature applications over the next year.

Neighbourhood Plans are a limited option given the time scale, and the way the Preferred Options document has been prepared to date, but they do give a view of the communities' aspirations for their area. We would urge the City Council to engage with us now and listen to the views of local communities, in order that we are able to support the Plan at Examination rather than oppose it. Marks Tey, Copford, Eight Ash Green and Aldham Parish Councils are already actively seeking to do this, but it requires collaboration to succeed and there are high levels of cynicism within all the villages that the City Council is insensitive to existing local communities.

The amount of growth envisaged for our villages in the Preferred Options impacts across parish boundaries and cannot be effectively communicated just by individual Parish Councils given the prescriptive format for responding to the Preferred Option Consultation. We are looking to supplement this with an agreed protocol through which the Seven Parishes can take an active role in helping the City Council finalise the Plan, with regular engagement across an agreed range of issues. This should include a vision and strategic master plan for growth at Marks Tey, that links to and informs a wider strategy across all seven parishes for funding and delivery of infrastructure and mitigation through s106 and or CIL, and phasing of development in the seven villages to align with infrastructure delivery. Infrastructure should include not just roads and public transport, but active travel, education, green space, medical services and social facilities to support a much larger population in 2041 and beyond.

19th January 2026