




## Local Plan Committee

Item  
**10**

7 February 2017

Report of	Head of Commercial Services	Author	Beverley McClean  282480
Title	Coastal Protection Belt Review		
Wards affected	Marks Tey and Layer, Mersea and Pyefleet, Old Heath and Hythe and Wivenhoe Wards		

**The Local Plan Committee is asked to note the changes as the result of the review of Colchester's Coastal Protection Belt**

### 1. Decision(s) Required

- 1.1 The Local Plan Committee is asked to note revisions to the Coastal Protection Belt (CPB) policy and map. The revised Coastal Protection Belt forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan for Colchester.

### 2. Reasons for Decision(s)

- 2.1 To ensure that the evidence base for the Local Plan provides a robust basis to support decisions on future planning applications affecting coastal wards of the Borough.

### 3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 The alternative would be rely on the current Coastal Protection Belt policy and map as evidence for the emerging Local Plan. The current policy was based on the Essex County Council 1984 Subject Plan and Structure Plan both of which are now obsolete as planning documents. Planning decisions based on these documents or the current Coastal Protection Belt policy and maps would not be made on the most up to date evidence and could be challenged.

### 4. Supporting Information

The original Coastal Protection Belt was originally defined in 1984 by Essex County Council in the Essex Coast Protection Subject Plan and included as policy in subsequent County Structure Plans for Essex until their abolition. A Coastal Protection Belt policy was also included in successive Local Plans for Colchester from 1984 onwards. It is still a valid policy in the current Local Plan for the Borough.

4.1 The Subject Plan recognised the rural and undeveloped character of the Essex coastline as a unique, finite and irreplaceable resource in its own right. In recognition, the Subject Plan set out a coastal protection policy, the main objective of which was to protect the coast outside built-up coastal areas from development that would adversely affect the open and rural character or wildlife within the area known as 'The Coastal Protection Belt'.

4.2 The original Coastal Protection Belt was defined using the following principles. The inland extent of the Coastal Protection Belt was delineated using the tidal influence of the river estuaries as the inland cut off point. The boundary was also delineated using permanent physical features on the ground i.e. roads, field boundaries and Public Rights of Way as these were readily identifiable and defensible features. The criteria below were also used to determine what land to include within the Coastal Protection Belt policy:

- **Areas of open, undeveloped and rural character with coastal/estuary views** – the areas excluded included urban coastline, larger towns/villages and industrial areas (with the exception of small villages and areas of development that retain their open quality such as minerals extraction sites).
- **Areas of high landscape value** – as defined by a landscape quality appraisal undertaken in 1976-78 that formed the basis for Special Landscape Areas in the Essex County Structure Plan.
- **Areas of designated nature conservation value** – Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Nature Conservancy Zones associated with coastal habitats such as saltings, marshes and mudflats.

4.3 The supporting documents underpinning the current Coastal Protection Belt designation are no longer valid. A review of Colchester's Coastal Protection Belt was commissioned to ensure that a Coastal Protection Belt policy based on up to date evidence could be included in the new Local Plan for the Borough.

4.4 The approach used to re-define the extent of the Coastal Protection Belt builds on the principles and criteria used in the original Essex Coast Subject Plan referred to above. It was also informed by legislative change (the 2006 European Landscape Convention), policy changes in the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to the protection and management of coastal areas in England and the need to manage climate change and to reflect updates to the Borough's Landscape Character Assessment.

4.5 The criteria and factors used to define which land to include and which to exclude from the Coastal Protection Belt were also reviewed. These are set out below:

- **Coastal Character** – inclusion of open, undeveloped and rural areas (terrestrial and inter-tidal) that have a distinctive coastal/estuarine

character and sense of place as defined by the Colchester Borough Landscape Character Assessment. This criterion is in line with NPPF objectives to protect the open, undeveloped and rural character of the coast.

- **Coastal Designations** – inclusion of designated sites of nature conservation value associated with coastal habitats such as saltings, marshes and mudflats; and designated sites of cultural heritage value associated with the Borough's coastal/maritime history. This criterion is in line with NPPF objectives to protect natural and historic environment designated assets in coastal areas.
- **Coastal Change Areas** – inclusion of coastal areas that are likely to experience significant physical changes as a result of permanent or temporary inundation. This criterion is in line with NPPF objectives for management of coastal change.

4.6 In determining whether to include areas in the CPB or not, the area should wholly or predominantly meet criterion A; or meet criteria B and/or C. In this way, greatest weight is given to criterion A in line with the main objective to protect the open, undeveloped and rural character of the coast.

4.7 Built up areas that were not predominantly rural, undeveloped and open have been excluded from the review, while Colchester Borough administrative boundaries and permanent identifiable and defensible physical features on the ground roads, field boundaries and the low-water mark in inter-tidal areas were also used to define the extent of the revised Coastal Protection Belt.

4.8 As a result of the review a new Coastal Protection Belt has been defined. The changes are discussed below in section 5 of this report and shown in the accompanying plans.

## **5. Proposals**

5.1 The main policy objective of the Coastal protection Belt to protect open undeveloped areas of the coast remains unchanged following the review. The key change was the extent of the land designated as falling within the Coastal Protection Belt. Following review, 4 new areas of land were proposed for addition to the Coastal Protection Belt and 4 areas were proposed for deletion. The Review was split into five zones as set out below;

Zone 1 – This zone covers the Mersea Flats on the seaward side of Mersea Island. Within this zone the Coastal Projection Belt was amended to include a coastal Schedule Ancient Monument in compliance with criteria B. The sea area below low water mark was deleted as it did not meet any of the revised criteria.

Zone 2 – No amendments were proposed within this zone which covers the Blackwater Estuary.

Zone 3 – Within this zone, 3 linear areas were added to the existing Coastal Protection Belt along the western boundary. The additional areas to be protected are located around Abberton, Peldon and to the north - west of Great and Little Wigborough and lie within the Northern Coastal Farmland Landscape Character Area.

Zone 4 – Zone 4 covers land around Wivenhoe and Rowhedge in the vicinity of the Upper Colne Estuary. Two areas of land; an area of coastal grazing marsh and designated Local Site and a previously excluded part of the Drained Estuarine Marsh Landscape Character Area were added to the Coastal Protection Belt. An area of land to the south of Rowhedge and land to the north west of Wivenhoe and another plot of land to the south east of Wivenhoe were deleted from the Coastal Protection Belt.

Zone 5 - No amendments were proposed within this zone which covers the lower Colne Estuary.

- 5.2 The deletions and additions to the revised Coastal Protection Belt within zones 1, 3 and 4 are shown diagrammatically in Figure 2 in Appendix 2 to this report. A new Coastal Protection Belt policy drafted as part of the review has also been included in the emerging Local Plan.
- 5.3 The Wivenhoe Neighbourhood Plan Working Group has challenged the removal of the area of land to the south east of Wivenhoe as they are seeking to protect this land from development through their emerging Neighbourhood Plan. The Council is working with the Neighbourhood Plan Group to identify an alternative approach for protecting this piece of land to avoid inconsistencies between the Coastal Protection policies in the Local Plan and Wivenhoe Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.4 It is proposed that the Coastal Protection Belt Review is used to inform the designation of a new Coastal Protection Belt and revised policy wording in the Submission draft of the Local Plan.

## **6. Strategic Plan References**

- 6.1 The Strategic Plan Action Plan includes a commitment to promote Colchester's heritage and wide ranging tourism attractions to enhance our reputation as a destination and to cultivate Colchester's green spaces and opportunities for health, wellbeing and the enjoyment of all.. The Coastal Protection Belt policy will help deliver these objectives.

## **7. Consultation**

- 7.1 The revised Coastal Protection Belt Policy and map have not been issued for public consultation. The Coastal Protection Belt Policy review paper is a technical document that forms part of the Local Plan evidence base. The Coastal Protection Belt Review paper and map are publically available on the Council's website under the new evidence base webpage.

## **8. Publicity Considerations**

- 8.1 The Coastal Protection Belt Review is not expected to generate publicity.

## **9. Financial Implications**

- 9.1 None

## **10. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for the Local Development Framework and is available to view on the Colchester Borough Council website by following this pathway from the homepage: Council and Democracy > Policies, Strategies and Performance > Equality and Diversity > Equality Impact Assessments > Commercial Services > Local Plan.
- 10.2 There are no particular Human Rights implications.

## **11. Community Safety Implications**

- 11.1 None identified.

## **12. Health and Safety Implications**

- 12.1 None identified.

## **13. Risk Management Implications**

- 13.1 The updated Coastal Protection Belt Policy will help ensure that the Council's planning policies are robust and based on up-to-date evidence that will prevent inappropriate development being permitted along the Borough's coast.

## **14. Disclaimer**

- 14.1 The information in this report was, as far as is known, correct at the date of publication. Colchester Borough Council cannot accept responsibility for any error or omissions.

## **Supporting Papers**

Coastal Protection Belt Review Paper  
Coastal Protection Belt Review Maps