

2 March 2022

Report of	Assistant Director Environment Assistant Director Place & Client Services	Author	Various
Title	River Strategy		
Wards affected	Lexden and Braiswick, Castle, Greenstead, Old Heath and the Hythe, Wivenhoe, Mersea and Pyefleet, Rural North		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The River Colne is a significant natural asset that runs through the heart of the Borough. This report sets out existing activity and projects associated with the river in addition to providing information to help inform a panel discussion on opportunities that exist to enhance the contribution the river makes to biodiversity, recreation, regeneration, and wellbeing.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To recommend to Cabinet that work commence to develop a new Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Colchester and that development of the strategy be incorporated within a Panel work programme for the 2022/23 municipal year. A key element of the strategy development to include consultation with stakeholders.
- 2.2 To recommend to Cabinet that options be explored working alongside key partners to identify and lever in external funding to accelerate wetland restoration projects as part of the Woodland and Biodiversity Programme of work.
- 2.3 To recommend to Cabinet that the Council collaborates with the Land Use and Green Infrastructure Essex Climate Action Commission with a view to the Council being a partner to the proposed Essex Climate Focus Area and that future updates are taken to Environment & Sustainability Panel for consideration.
- 2.4 To recommend to cabinet that an options paper on fishing rights for the River Colne be developed with stakeholders and presented to the relevant portfolio holder for agreement.

3. Action Required

- 3.1 To note the information provided and consider the recommendations set out within this report.

4. Background Information

- 4.1 The river Colne rises at Steeple Bumpstead in Braintree district and flows south east through Halstead and Wakes Colne to Colchester, where it becomes tidal before joining the Blackwater Estuary. The headwaters of the catchment, north-west of Colchester town are predominantly rural in nature, giving way to a more urban environment downstream at the town itself. The river has three distinctive character zones (see plan attached at Appendix 1).
- 4.2 Upper Colne (Rural River): In this stretch the river flows through a rural landscape from west of Wakes Colne for about 9km until it reaches the A12 and the outskirts of urban Colchester. This countryside is important for its natural and historic environment, as well as providing the attractive landscape setting for both local villages and rural communities, such as Ford Street and Chappel and Colchester town itself. It also provides important agricultural, tourism and recreational opportunities. Popular with cyclists and walkers the area includes a section of the Essex Way and the impressive Chappel railway viaduct, popular pubs and visitor attractions such as the East Anglian Railway Museum (which also hosts highly popular events such as the Chappel Beer Festival and Thomas the Tank Engine Days) that create local employment and help support local economies and communities.
- 4.3 Urban River (Mid-Colne): In Colchester town itself, the rich historic environment and river landscapes provide the basis for visitor attractions and experiences for visitors, such as the multi-award-winning Colchester Castle Museum, Castle Park (which is a Registered Park and Garden), as well as enhancing the quality of life for local residents. Through the town, the river forms a natural corridor and amenity. There are riverside walking and cycle routes which could be extended giving traffic free routes for both commuting and leisure trips, and with links to the Town Centre, Wivenhoe, and the Rowhedge Trail. The Colchester Orbital, a circular trail around town, crosses the river in Cymbeline Meadows to the west of the town as well as near the University of Essex in The Hythe. The Borough's historic town centre is the focal point for visitor attractions, such as Colchester Castle as well as leisure and cultural attractions facilities such as the Mercury Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre and Firstsite visual art gallery. In addition, as a regional centre Colchester town is a hub for shopping and entertainment and has a thriving social economy with three cinemas, pubs, cafes and restaurants. The town centre is also the key focus for development opportunities and challenges, including on the riverside. The Hythe area, to the east of the town, is a former commercial harbour which includes some rundown and underused industrial land in East Colchester. In the past few years, the eastern area of Colchester has experienced a period of significant change and growth. The area provides good access to Hythe Station but much of the Hythe area is in flood zone 3 and the river can form a barrier to movement.
- 4.4 Colne Estuary (Lower Colne): The open character of the Colne estuary is largely an undeveloped and rural landscape with a rich, diverse and irreplaceable natural asset in terms of its natural and cultural heritage. The ecological importance of the Colne Estuary is reflected by the variety of international and European designations covering them i.e. Ramsar sites, Special Protection Areas (SPA) and the Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated under the Habitats Directive. The Colne Estuary is also protected as part of the larger Colne, Blackwater, Roach and Crouch Marine Conservation Zone. There are also a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Local Wildlife Sites designated around the estuary. The River's estuary is home to a number of sizeable communities and visitor destinations in Rowhedge and Wivenhoe, extending round to coastal communities such as West Mersea, which is world-famous for its oyster cultivation (Colchester Natives and Rock Oysters which could have potential for Protected Geographical Indication status). There are a number of diverse considerations

and land uses which all need to be managed in an integrated way within this zone. These include internationally important habitats, landscape character, land and water-based recreation, fishing, birding and archaeological and heritage assets. Obligations to protect the natural and heritage assets must be balanced against the need to satisfy the wider socio-economic aspirations of both residents and visitor communities. Climate change, including sea level rise presents increasing pressure on the management of estuary habitats and coastal communities along the Colne estuary fringe. The Coastal Protection Belt which covers some of the lower estuary, is designed to shape which developments can be accommodated in these sensitive environments. A new coastal path is currently being planned by Natural England around the whole of England's coastline which includes the edge of the Colne estuary.

- 4.5 Whilst the Council has ownership of the riverbed within its area the Council has limited ownership of land around and adjacent to the River Colne and its estuary, with the majority being in private ownership and some owned and used by the Ministry of Defence. This can give rise to potential difficulties when considering new or expanded activities, construction or work upon and aside the river. It has also meant that regeneration work and provision of new amenities has mostly been through conditions set on developers as part of the planning system, rather than proactively carried out by Colchester Borough Council.
- 4.6 Mooring agreements and licences are administered within Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd and the Environment Service. In some cases, there are well established moorings for which no agreements are in place, due to the length of time for which the mooring point has been in use and the riparian rights that have been established.
- 4.7 Activity around the River Colne is supported by a number of strategies and policies which are outlined at Sections 6 and 7. As a significant natural asset and key feature of the Borough, the river is relevant across a broad policy and strategic framework including environment, sustainability, economy, regeneration, health, wellbeing, culture and heritage.
- 4.8 Discussions have taken place in the past about the need for a standalone River Strategy. Given the wide range of activity and projects being delivered or proposed across a range of strategic themes the need for a standalone strategy was deprioritised upon adoption of the Strategic Plan 2020-23. As set out below under the current strategic themes of 'Tackling the climate emergency and leading sustainability' and 'Creating safe, healthy and active communities' a new Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Colchester will be developed and will include the river as a key element within the strategy.
- 4.9 The river is also included in programmes such as 'We are Colchester' which brings links between the riverside walking routes and the Town Centre closer, Colchester Orbital, which runs along the river in several places and the Woodland and Biodiversity project where wetland restoration forms a key part of the vision.

5. Green and Blue Infrastructure

- 5.1 Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) is defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) as 'A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. ' It includes important public and private areas in an urban and rural context where 'green' is vegetation and 'blue' refers to water i.e., rivers, canals, ponds or lakes.

- 5.2 The Borough Council previously developed a Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2011 however this is now dated and requires review as the Borough has changed significantly over the last decade.
- 5.3 Development of a new GBI Strategy is in the early stages of planning as part of the Council's wider Transformation programme. Whilst yet to be developed a new strategy will likely need to:
- Identify and provide an assessment of the green and blue infrastructure network;
 - Set out the key drivers and 'needs' for GBI in the borough;
 - Identify areas of deficiency in terms of quality, value and accessibility;
 - Identify priority areas and areas of opportunity. To include improvements to existing GBI and new GBI; and
 - Set out mechanisms for delivery. To include priority projects, actions and partnership working.
- 5.4 Whilst Officers have undertaken some early planning the development of a new GBI strategy is scheduled to take place in 2022/23 and it is envisioned that the work will form part of a Members Panel work programme in the new municipal year.

6. Planning Context

- 6.1 The planning context set out below highlights the key policy drivers which may be relevant to considering opportunities for the river and wider GBI. It highlights key National Planning Policy References, the Adopted and emerging Local Plan Policy and Neighbourhood Plans as relevant. This is not exhaustive but highlights the key framework which may be important.

6.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The policies that are relevant to the river and its use within NPPF 2021, include:

- Paragraph 20d provides for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure.
- Paragraph 98 identifies the role of open spaces in providing benefits for nature and climate change
- Paragraph 124 identifies the role of well-designed, attractive and healthy places.
- Paragraph 130 requires that developments are visually attractive and sympathetic to local character including landscape setting.
- Paragraph 131 identifies the role trees contribute to character
- Paragraph 153 identifies the need for plans to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account long term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes.
- Paragraph 161 identifies the approach to minimising the impacts of development on flood risk outlining the sequential approach for the location and suitability of uses in areas likely to flood
- Paragraph 174 seeks protection of valued landscapes, the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and its wider benefits and providing net gains for biodiversity.
- Paragraph 190 recognises the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits the conservation of the historic environment can bring.

- 6.3 At the same time the NPPF recognises:

- The importance of economic growth along with barriers such as adverse environments (paragraph 81 and 82)

- That there is a role for sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside (paragraph 84).
- That access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is recognised as important for the health and well-being of communities (paragraphs 92 and 93)
- Tranquil areas and the effects of noise or light pollution are a potential issue (paragraph 185)

6.4 In the context of much of the river particularly around the Estuaries being nationally / internationally designated sites for environmental and wildlife reasons the following references in the NPPF are also relevant;

- Paragraph 180 – the principles which apply to development within or close to SSSIs seeking a sequential approach for development which may have adverse impacts as well as the need for mitigation where necessary and
- Paragraph 180 b) the exceptional approach to development where it can be demonstrated that these benefits clearly outweigh the impacts
- Paragraph 182 advising the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where a plan or project is likely to have significant effect on areas designated under the European habitats regulations including Ramsar and SAC. The GBI may need to be subject to a Habitats Regulation Scoping Opinion to determine whether the plan / “strategy” has any likely significant effects.

6.5 Core Strategy Adopted December 2008 as amended by the Focused Review (2014) - It is to be noted that the Local Plan context will be updated as soon as the new Local Plan is Adopted (which will be before the GBI is completed). The current plan is The Adopted Local Plan (Focussed review 2014) which sets the vision, objectives and spatial strategy, as well as policy, up until 2021, including major regeneration areas through which the River Colne runs. The policies in the Adopted Local Plan that are of relevance include:

- ENV1 Environment emphasises the importance of protecting and enhancing unallocated greenfield land outside settlement boundaries.

Core Strategy Development Policies DPD (Adopted October 2010, amended 2014) 3.7

- Policy DP1: Design and Amenity emphasises the importance of respecting and enhancing the character of the context and surroundings, as well as the site.
- Policy DP23: Coastal Areas: Approach to development within the Coastal Protection belt managing development according to its need for a coastal location and minimising and mitigating against any impacts on the coast environment.

6.6 Colchester Borough Council Local Plan 2017-2033 Publication Draft (CD4.1) and (Track Changes Modified Section 2 Local Plan October 2021 (CD 4.6) - The Emerging Local Plan (2017-2033) is currently awaiting the inspector's report following consultation on the modifications to the plan. It is anticipated that this will be Adopted and provide the most relevant Planning Policy context before the GBI is completed. It sets out the vision, strategy, objectives and policy for planning and delivery across the borough through to 2033. The emerging allocated sites are identified in the proposals plan. The policies in the Emerging Local Plan that are of relevance include:

- Emerging Policy ENV1- Environment supports the conservation and enhancement of Colchester's natural and historic environment, countryside and coastline, and is the main policy in the emerging Local Plan that is of relevance to environmental issues. It recognizes the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, including the open and undeveloped stretches of coastline of the Coastal Protection Belt.

- Emerging Policy ENV2: Coastal Areas identifies that within the Coastal Protection Belt development will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that it requires a coastal location and is located within the developed area. The aim is to protect the character of the Coastal Protection Belt by preventing urban sprawl into the more open and undeveloped areas.

6.7 Neighbourhood Plans

- *Wivenhoe Neighbourhood Plan* – this plan was approved at referendum in May 2019 and includes key policies relevant to the River Colne. The plan area incorporates a section of the north bank of the Lower Colne within Colchester Borough.
- *Eight Ash Green Neighbourhood Plan* – ‘Made’ by Colchester Borough Council in December 2019, it covers part of the river in the Upper Colne
- *West Bergholt Neighbourhood Plan* – Plan ‘made’ by Colchester Borough Council in October 2019, it covers part of the river in the Upper Colne.
- *West Mersea Draft Plan* is scheduled to go to referendum on 17th March 2022 which will hopefully be agreed at that time to enable adoption. It’s location at the confluence of the Colne and Blackwater estuaries is key to the tidal section of the Colne and the wider European designations (Ramsar and SAC)

7. **Existing Initiatives, Projects and Opportunities**

- 7.1 ‘We Are Colchester’ - partnership between Colchester Council, Essex County Council, businesses and other groups, was launched in 2020, and successfully bid for £18.2 million from the government’s Town Deal scheme. Although the funding does not address the river environment directly; it does enhance the Borough’s walking and cycling infrastructure, taking a crucial step to bring a link between the riverside walking routes and the Town Centre closer
- 7.2 Active Travel - Access to and along the Colne area is fundamental to residents and visitors enjoying the river and acting as a transport link to other destinations, for example the town centre, Colchester Institute and University. The Colchester Cycling Delivery Strategy SPD identifies the Rowhedge Trail (Rowhedge Trail to Hythe) and Wivenhoe Trail (Wivenhoe Quay to Middleborough area) as quiet mainly off-road routes. The section between East Bay and Hythe is currently being promoted as part of the Town Deal and LCWIP4 route. The public right of way (PROW) which runs either side of the Colne from Colne Causeway Bridge to Hythe Bridge are identified for reinstatement as currently they break the link in the existing walking and cycling network. Developments on land which will open up access to and/or enhance the Colne areas should be encouraged. Contributions through s.106 can provide support for enhancing cycling and walking routes along the river as has been the case for improving the Rowhedge Trail which has received around £100,000 in contributions to make the route more accessible for people living in Rowhedge to access the Hythe Station, University and the town centre via a direct and off-road route, provided by the developments in Rowhedge. S.106 contributions have also been secured from the student accommodations for improvements to the Wivenhoe Trail and other walking and cycling routes in the vicinity of and giving access to the river Colne. S.106 will continue to be required to provide for and encourage more people to use the area for active travel, heritage interpretation and CCTV potentially, where these are identified as being relevant to any development proposed.
- 7.3 Colchester Orbital –The Colchester Orbital is a circular route around town, connecting some of its most important and beautiful green spaces and off-road pathway networks.

The route follows public rights of way, links with cycle paths wherever possible and follows or crosses the riverside in several places. Opportunities exist to enhance the route of the Orbital along the riverside.

- 7.4 England Coast Path – The new National Trail around England's coast is being delivered by Natural England. It delivers new rights to enjoy the coast within the coastal margin, including in the Colne estuary, as well as infrastructure such as signs and gates.
- 7.5 Woodland and Biodiversity Project – The Woodland & Biodiversity Project aims to create a legacy of a greener place for Colchester in the future. To ensure that this aim is met, the project has a focus on three intrinsically linked areas:
- Communities - To add value to the health and wellbeing of our communities and support the development of deep-rooted connection.
 - Wildlife - To develop, enhance and diversify our wildlife within Colchester.
 - Environment - Reduce the environmental impact of the Council and influence others to follow our lead.

Wetland restoration is a key ambition of the project with the project team working to develop a programme along the River Colne corridor, river valley, and catchment. Unfortunately, the Project was unsuccessful with an application to the Government's Green Recovery Fund, in partnership with En-Form and Abberton Rural Training. However the intention is to continue to work with these partners and others to source the funding to delivery of the wetland restoration element of the project.

- 7.6 Management of Duckweed - Areas of the River Colne suffer with duckweed at certain times of the year. The Council's Park Rangers actively monitor duckweed levels on the river throughout the Spring and Summer to manage and keep growth to a minimum.

The Rangers operate the weir at middle mill at least once a week during the summer to break up the rafts of weed and flush the weed through and out over the gates at East Bay. This is obviously weather dependant: when we have significant rainfall, it can be opened for longer periods and on extra occasions. During long dry spells it can only be opened for shorter periods before it must be closed to allow the water level to rise again. During extended dry periods we have found that we can't send enough water down to allow the automatic gates at East Bay to open so the weed tends to build up there until the water level is sufficiently high enough to trigger the gates.

Aware that the presence of duck weed causes concern to the public, a [webpage](#) with frequently asked questions has been created and signage is installed on site.

- 7.7 Fishing access rights - The lease for a section of the river has recently changed and now falls within the Council's control. Officers are now considering the options and impact of allowing fishing to all or parts of the river. This will be developed with stakeholders and recommendations presented to the Portfolio Holder for agreement.

Currently fishing is only permitted in dedicated fishing lakes including High Woods Country Park and Salary Brook. Further consideration could be given to allow fishing within the boundaries of Castle Park utilising the existing locations where the fishing platforms are (although these would need replacing) as well as Kings Head Meadow towards the old outdoor swimming pool site onto Cymberline Meadows.

Fishing permits are issued digitally, and the team monitor them on their daily patrols (Highwoods Country Park). Resource would be needed to monitor and enforce fishing permits in other areas of the river.

A balance would need to be struck between managing the wildlife and users - an independent study of the suitability of the areas would be recommended.

- 7.8 Fieldgate Quay Repair - The Council owns the section of quayside known as Fieldgate Quay which forms part of a former commercial harbour located on the tidal section of the River Colne at The Hythe.

In November 2020 Officers were notified of a collapse to a section of steel piled river wall caused by a failure of the wall anchor system and the corrosion of sheet piles from which the wall is largely constructed. The sheet piles bowed and protruded out into the river. The section of quay behind the failure point subsequently subsided including the collapse of the public right of way running alongside the wall between Rowhedge and Colchester Town which has remained closed since.

Subsequent monitoring of the full Fieldgate quayside was undertaken and movement was detected in a different location with piling beginning to deflect away from the quay.

An outlet pipe serving the sewage treatment works operated by Anglia Water is located in close proximity to the section of failed sheet piling. The outlet is part of a significant separate concrete construction set back from the river wall and is in sound structural condition with no evidence to suggest the failed steel piling is compromising the outlet structure.

The proximity of the failed and deteriorating quayside to a site occupied under a long lease has significantly restricted engineering options for remediation. As a result the Council, advised by Norfolk Property Service and Breheny Civil Engineering, have explored a replacement like for like sheet piled solution to the failed section of river wall. To progress works, consent from the Marine Management Organisation was applied for and notice of this application is proceeding.

Recent changes in circumstances means the adjacent site previously occupied under lease will now likely revert to the Council as Freehold owner. Control of the site affords the Council the opportunity to reassess options for remediation and consider alternative engineering solutions previously not considered feasible. Importantly, and subject to necessary permissions it will enable the Council to reopen and divert the footpath earlier than planned (the current footpath closure notice expires in August 2022).

There are further sections of steel piled quayside reaching, or at the end, of its intended design lifecycle. Use and access requirements to the river, particularly within the former commercial harbour area are evolving meaning like for like replacement of steel piling may not be the best option and needs to be considered along with the associated environmental and economic implications. Aside from the immediate necessary repairs and reopening of the footpath the longer term strategy for replacing sections of steel piled river wall will be developed through the proposed GBI strategy work.

- 7.9 The Climate Focus Area - The Essex Climate Action Commission was set up to advise on tackling climate change. In July 2021 the Commission published its 'Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral report'. The report identifies that we have a nature crisis as well as a climate crisis. The report also recognises the risks from flooding are projected to

double across Essex over the next 30 years. The Commission recommends that 75% of schemes to increase flood resilience pursue nature-based solutions.

Nature-based flood solutions accumulate carbon and enhance biodiversity as well as reduce flood risk. They create large areas of Natural Green Infrastructure, improve wetland habitat, and act as a sponge, allowing water to percolate more slowly into groundwater and rivers, improving both water conservation and water quality.

Through the Commission a Land Use & Green Infrastructure Special Interest Group has been established and has developed recommendations for a Land Use & Green Infrastructure Climate Action programme, covering both the whole County and a proposed Climate Focus Area (CFA) within the County. It is recommended that the catchments of the Blackwater and Colne Rivers are the CFA covering approximately 30% of Essex. Whilst this area covers five Boroughs within Essex, Colchester has the largest geographical area within the proposed CFA and stands to benefit from the opportunities this may present. Being part of the CFA will help to develop and support Colchester's own GBI strategy development process with potential for new investment and accelerated approaches to pilot projects.

- 7.10 Anti-social behaviour - The Council receives numerous reports from Brightlingsea Harbour Master, Essex Marine Police, and members of the public regarding anti-social behaviour (ASB) on the Blackwater Estuary around Mersea Island and the River Colne. The ASB most frequently reported is that of speeding watercraft, which are regulated by speed limits.

Byelaw signage is located on all slipways in Mersea and information is provided on the Council website. A leaflet has also been produced.

A voluntary body called Colne Watch based at Wivenhoe, report ASB problems to the Essex Marine Police and provide photographic evidence which the Police collate and use to take enforcement action.

Speeding craft can cause numerous issues, not least:

- Impact and risk to local wildlife, ecosystems, and biodiversity in and around the waterways
- Erosion of the water banks, impacting the integrity of the river
- Risk to injury and life of others using the waterways, such as swimmers

The Essex Marine Police have approached the Council, to explore the implementation of a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to help regulate the speed limits and ASB in the Blackwater Estuary and the River Colne. A PSPO means that the Council could undertake on the spot fines, creating an immediate impact on those causing the offence at the time, instead of the lengthy and court process currently experienced. Officers are now in discussion with the Marine Police and other stakeholders to implement a PSPO which covers the Blackwater Estuary and River Colne and it is anticipated that the PSPO will go out to consultation during 2022.

- 7.11 Essex Wildlife Trust (EWT) – River Catchment projects, including the Essex Water Vole Recovery Project and RIVERSEARCH training volunteer surveyors; Fingringhoe Wick Nature Reserve, EWT's first wildlife reserve and visitor centre overlooking the Colne Estuary; The Living Seas project including coastal clean-ups and shore search surveys.

Opportunities exist to work in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust to develop priorities to improve the ecological quality of the river and its setting.

- 7.12 Visit Essex - The official marketing and tourism promotion agency for Essex aiming to encourage short breaks, challenge negative perceptions of the county, raise the profile of Essex as a visitor destination and create a 'sense of place'.
- 7.13 River & Waterways Safety Audit - A water safety consultant has completed an audit of rivers, waterways and open water on Council land or for which the Council has responsibility or owe a duty of care, ranging from streams and ponds in Country Parks, to the River Colne flowing through Castle Park and the Hythe Quay, and West Mersea floating pontoon. This was undertaken to ensure legal compliance and suitable safety provisions are in place to help prevent drowning and water related incidents across the Borough.

The UK Drowning Prevention Strategy aims to reduce accidental drowning fatalities in the UK by 50 per cent, by 2026. A central objective of the UK national strategy is to ensure that water risks are assessed, and with the necessary safety provisions which the audit is to provide the Council reassurance or detail recommendations to improve safety.

A draft report has been provided to the Corporate Health and Safety Officer and will be reviewed as necessary within the relevant teams. As a summary, most areas were concluded as being managed suitably and to continue with risk assessment processes such as maintaining fence lines which help prevent unauthorised access. Some areas have recommendations identified for improvements such as signage, improving natural barriers by adjusting maintenance programmes or planting new greenery or trees. Installation of additional life saving devices was recommended in key locations along the Hythe Quay. Once the final report is available, a recorded action plan will be used to document and monitor progress and included in the Council's usual health and safety management and reporting processes.

- 7.14 The new Economic Strategy for Colchester (2015-2021) - aims to create a place which is vibrant, prosperous, thriving and welcoming for residents, businesses and visitors alike. It recognises the importance of promoting our Place, and in particular of tourism to the Borough. Tourism and hospitality are core sectors for the Borough's economy: creating new jobs; raising and retaining skills; protecting and promoting our heritage and open space assets; and creating, supporting and retaining businesses in the supply chain.

The new Economic Strategy is also likely to include a priority to support businesses to decarbonise. Such work to tackle the climate emergency has a direct impact on our management of the river in the future with sea-levels forecast to rise.

8. Risk Management Implications

- 8.1 There are no specific risk management implications to this report.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1 There are no specific direct financial implications to this report however the report sets out the key contribution the river makes to the local economy, tourism and local prosperity. Current projects and activities set out in this report are delivered within existing budgets and in many circumstances projects and initiatives lever in external funds, grants and contributions. Additional projects or new initiatives would require additional budget and resource for delivery.

10. Strategic Plan References

- 10.1 This report is relevant to a number of key themes within the Strategic Plan 2020-23 including; 'Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability'. 'creating safe, health and active communities' and 'celebrating our heritage and culture'.

11. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 11.1 There is a wide variety of uses and natural processes that take place on and around the river, with many opportunities for enhancement as well as some conflicting interests with leisure, development and business uses. Management of the river for these different uses will have to consider the implications they could have on the environment, including impacts on flood risk, existing habitats and biodiversity, carbon sequestration and water quality amongst others

Balancing these issues for wildlife, the environment and people is a complex challenge and the end result must also protect those natural processes that maintain the health of the river.

12. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 12.1 There are no human rights implications to this report. There are equality and diversity implications regarding use of the river insofar as the river should be as accessible as possible to all members of the community to benefit from the associated positive wellbeing outcomes.

13. Consultation

- 13.1 The Council works alongside a diverse array of local stakeholders day to day in relation to the river and activities that take place in and around it. Consultation with the community is a key component of existing projects and local stakeholders will be a core element of the GBI strategy development.

14. Publicity Considerations

- 14.1 There are no direct publicity considerations at this time, however these may arise in relation to specific actions which may be recommended by the Panel to Cabinet.

15. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 15.1 The River Colne is a key natural asset and an integral part of Colchester as a 'place'. Accordingly, it has a significant role to play in (re) connecting people and communities with place and a sense of pride in what makes Colchester special. Creating attractive and healthy places to live, work, invest and spend leisure time is key. The river is a hub for outdoor pursuits and provides a platform for mass participation to combat physical inactivity across the local population.

The Council carries out enforcement action and works with partner organisations in order to ensure all legal restrictions and regulations to safeguard community safety are complied with by river users.

16. Health and Safety Implications

16.1 See paragraph 7.13

Appendices

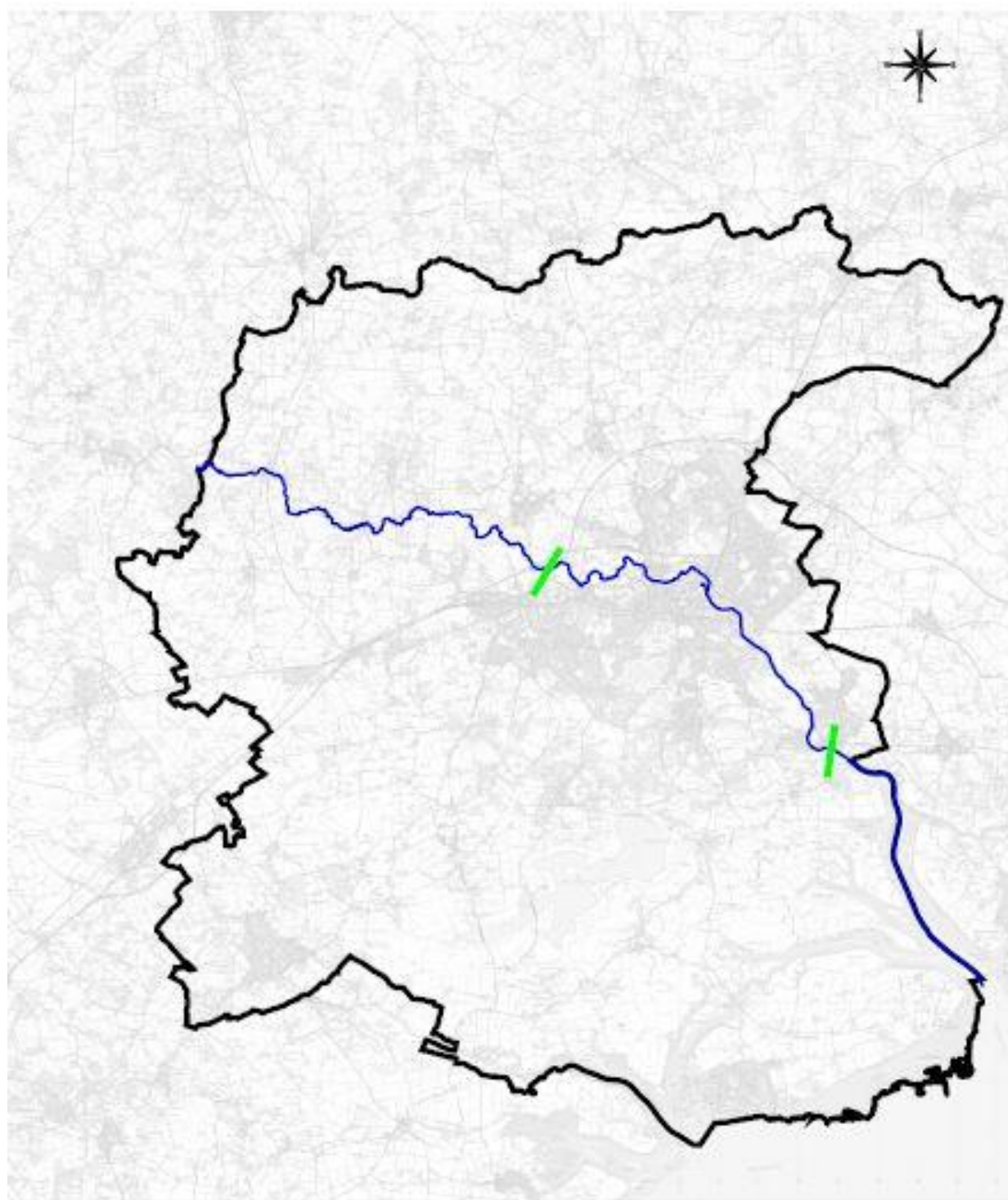
Appendix 1 – Map depicting three ‘character zones of River Colne

Appendix 2 – Maps displaying areas of environmental interest in and around the Colne, specifically:

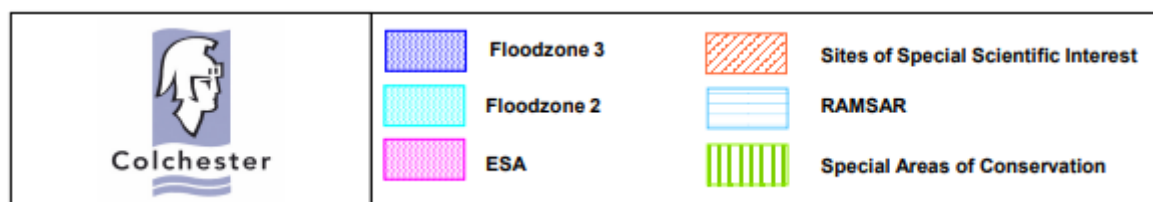
- Environment Agency Floodzones
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- RAMSAR Areas (Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat)
- Special Areas of Conservation

Appendix 3 – Stakeholder list (not exhaustive)

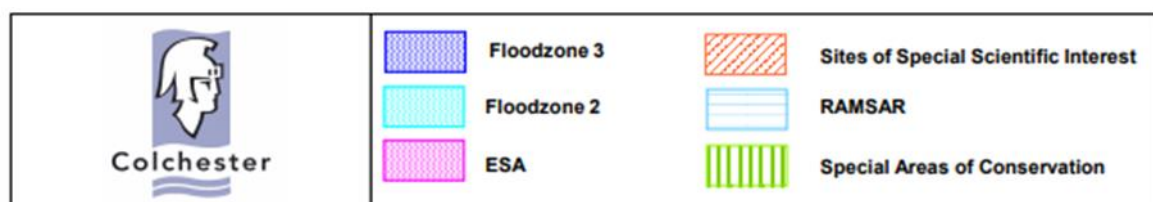
Appendix 1



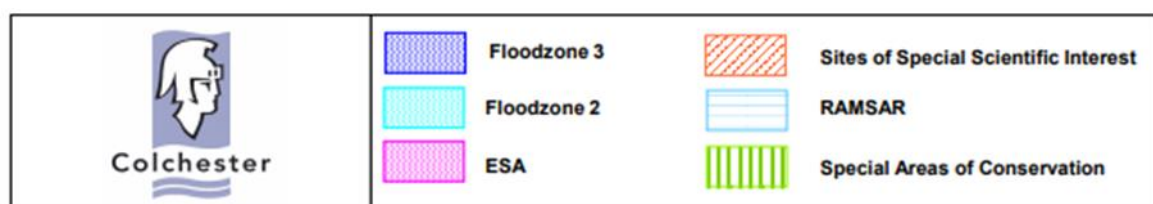
Appendix 2



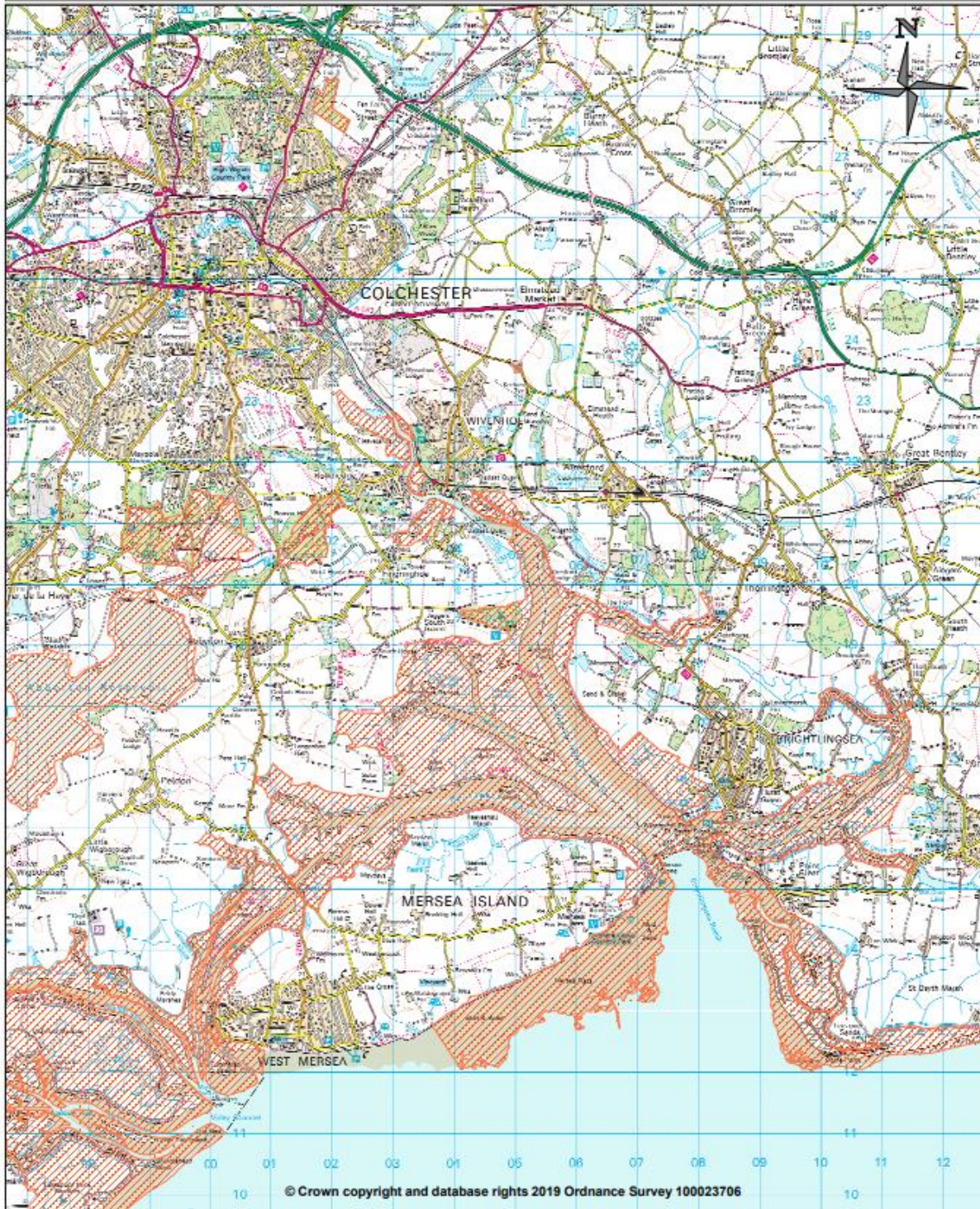
Colne River



Colne River



Colne River



Colne River



Colne River



© Crown copyright and database rights 2019 Ordnance Survey 100023706



Floodzone 3



Floodzone 2



ESA



Sites of Special Scientific Interest



RAMSAR



Special Areas of Conservation

Appendix 3

Key Stakeholders (not exhaustive)

- ECC - PROW and Transport and Sustainability colleagues
- Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership
- Hythe boat owners
- Anglian Water
- Essex Marine Police
- River Watch
- Town & Parish Councils
- Brightlingsea Harbour Master
- Colne Watch
- Brightlingsea Yacht Club
- Brightlingsea Coastal Rowing Club
- Rowhedge Coastal Rowing Club
- Wivenhoe Canoe and Kayak Club
- Essex Wildlife Trust
- Royal Society Protection of Birds
- Wivenhoe and Rowhedge Ferry
- Environment Agency
- The Waterside Committee in West Mersea
- Commercial Fishermen
- Oystermen
- Charterboat Skippers
- Dabchicks Sailing Club
- West Mersea Yacht Club
- Waterside Business
- Wivenhoe Sailing Club
- Wivenhoe Coursairs Rowing Club
- Colchester Canoe Club
- Adjacent land owners in East and West Mersea (some allow access onto the water for Private Water Craft Use)
- Seaview Holiday Park
- Colchester Cycling Campaign
- Colchester University
- Walk Colchester
- Ramblers Essex
- Beach hut owners
- Mersea Harbour Protection Trust
- West Mersea Lifeboat
- Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator
- Brett Aggregates (responsible for structures in the river)
- Waldegrave Holiday Park
- Essex County Council Youth Camp
- Coppers Beach Holiday Park
- Fen Farm Campsite
- Historic England designated heritage assets
- Essex Gardens Trust – Castle Park