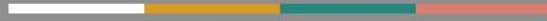




Colchester  
COMMERCIAL HOLDINGS



# ANNUAL REPORT



2022 - 23



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# FOREWORD



## Welcome to the 2022/23 Annual Report

The last year and the months that have followed it have been highly significant for Amphora, the City Council and, indeed, beyond. The economic climate has impacted on us all and both the City Council and Amphora have not been immune from this.

This has had a particular bearing on some of the major projects which Amphora has been supporting the City Council to deliver, including the Northern Gateway and several housing and regeneration schemes. As a result, there is less certainty over some schemes and the Board has concluded that it is no longer appropriate to treat at least some of these as 'work in progress'.

This has resulted in some costs being realised in our accounts in a way that led the Group to show a small loss for 2022/23. Whilst this is disappointing, it feels an appropriate response to the changed circumstances that flow from factors outside of Amphora or, indeed, the City Council's control. Going forward, the Board is developing an appropriate strategy for the future, which takes account of the changed context and the more constrained ability of the City Council as Amphora's shareholder, to accommodate risk.

Despite the more difficult economic backdrop and indeed other challenges, our Events team has continued to stage events on Colchester's behalf, demonstrating an extraordinary resilience and recovery following the years affected by the pandemic. We have supported subscribers to our Helpline service, we continue to upgrade and improve the City's CCTV network, and provide cost-effective broadband connectivity to an expanding number of residents and businesses. In addition, we have achieved, or exceeded, the key performance indicators for the Estate Management service we deliver on behalf of the Council.

This report provides a little more insight into these and other achievements.

None of these achievements would be possible without the skills and contributions of our staff and I would like to place on record my continued thanks and appreciation for what they do on behalf of Amphora and, more importantly, the residents of Colchester.

### Cllr Martyn Warnes

Chair of Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd  
Board of Directors



## WHO WE ARE

Colchester Commercial (Holdings) Ltd (CCHL) is the holding company for three subsidiaries, with related but distinct products, services, markets and opportunities. We continue to consolidate our three trading entities into a high-quality commercial offer which maintains the strong public sector ethos of our shareholder.

Colchester Amphora Energy Ltd (CAEL) designs and implements low carbon energy systems and provides energy services in Colchester.

Colchester Amphora Trading Ltd (CATL) delivers high quality products and services to public and private sector clients in the property, leisure and health care industries.

Colchester Amphora Homes Ltd (CAHL) delivers high quality affordable and private homes for sale in Colchester and the surrounding area.

## WE AIM TO

Generate profit to maintain viability, reduce risk, return a dividend to our shareholder and re-invest in our organisation

Provide our clients with high-quality products and services while maintaining a high level of return for the council

Capitalise on our range of unique products and services to gain market share

Operate in a commercial, innovative manner exploring options for development and expansion

Improve quality and availability of homes for private sale and affordable rent for local people

Help build the brand for Colchester as a place to do business, invest, live, study and visit

## HOW WE ARE GOVERNED

CCHL is operated through a Board of Directors, which has delegated authority from the shareholder (CCC) to determine strategy and direction of the business in accordance with its objectives, and through joint working with the Senior Management Team.

The directors each hold an individual responsibility for making decisions, providing leadership and monitoring the performance of the company. The directors are responsible for obtaining appropriate legal, financial and tax advice to enable them to make informed decisions about the running of the company. The directors are responsible for maintaining and regularly reviewing a robust risk management framework.

The Board meet on a quarterly basis and are bound by the Articles of Association, Code of Conduct and Governance Agreement with Colchester City Council, the company's shareholder.

# HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR YEAR

## 2022/23



Working with partners, **ultrafast gigabit connectivity** was made available to almost **3,000 homes** across Wivenhoe, taking the overall investments secured by Colchester Amphora in future-proof connectivity to **£14.5m**.

**Gigabit broadband** connectivity made to **20+ public sites**, including Museums, Colchester Castle and Castle Park, Colchester Town Hall, and several **Colchester Borough Homes** sheltered housing schemes.



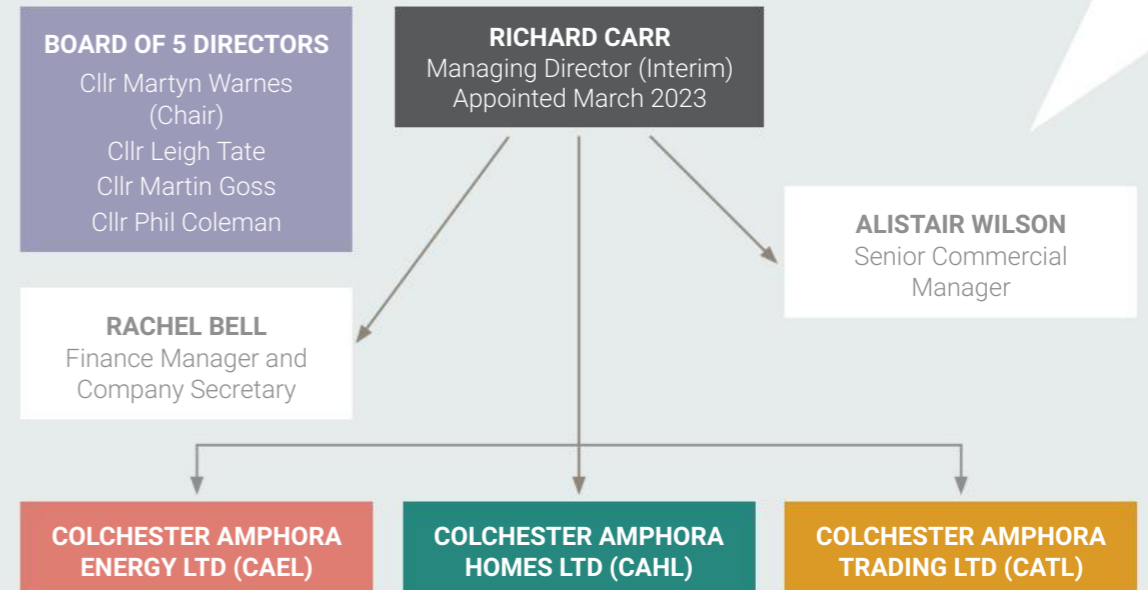
**2426** incidents dealt with

**238 assists** with arrest, working with Essex Police



Awarded **3 year** North Essex Falls contract via NHS Suffolk and North East Essex **Integrated Care Board (ICB)**

# COLCHESTER COMMERCIAL (HOLDINGS) LTD (CCHL)



## FINANCIAL REVIEW

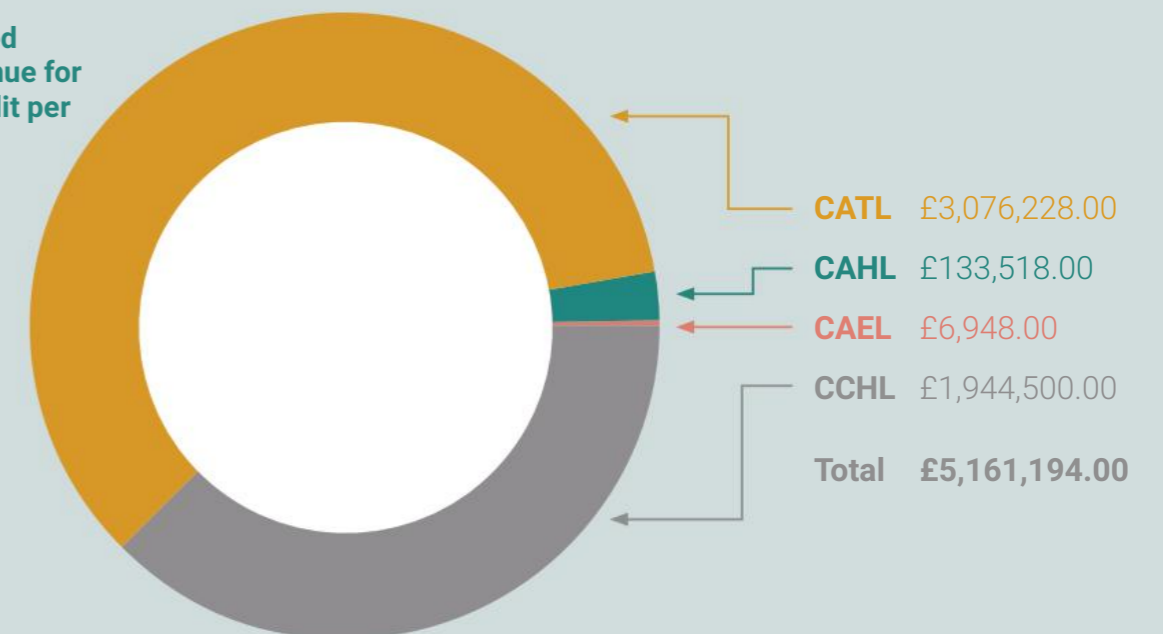
This year has been particularly challenging for the Group, given the impact of the wider economic climate on the activities and projects it has been undertaking. A prudent approach to future works and income streams has been taken, which has resulted in the write off of some previously capitalised costs in this current financial year. The costs written off total £273,164.

This has resulted in a group loss position, totalling £138,732. This cost reset has been necessary to ensure the Group is in the most

streamlined and efficient position moving forwards.

In the year ending 31 March 2023, CCHL received £5,161,194 of income for the products and services it provides and spent £5,326,776 to provide its services, inclusive of the write off previously mentioned. This includes £655,285 paid to CCC through a service level agreement for support services and accommodation; and £100,000 paid to CCC for the use of several venues used to run events across the City.

Consolidated Group revenue for 2022/23 split per Company



# COLCHESTER AMPHORA TRADING LTD PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2022/23



## COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT 2022/23

Colchester Amphora Trading's (CATL) Commercial Development team provides a range of services to Colchester City Council (CCC), from project inception and feasibility through to full development management services and delivery of large-scale construction projects.

### Colchester Northern Gateway (CNG)

The procurement and appointment of a contractor for the pumping station project was finalised, and the design confirmation set in motion. Additionally, the contract with Systra highways professional services was terminated and replaced by Aecom.

We have successfully procured professional services encompassing architectural, quantity surveying, and CDM (Construction Design and Management). Moreover, we have received confirmation regarding road booking space for the year 2024.

The development of the highways design is currently in progress, and plans are in place for the opening of The Walk. To ensure a smooth project execution, we are actively working on the clearance of site materials, and further ground investigation works are being carried out.

### Commercial Development Feasibility Programmes

The year saw a diversity of fee agreements awarded to CATL for feasibility works including:

- **Heart of Greenstead**  
- assistance on the council's business case for redevelopment works utilising Town Deal funding for new homes, a community hub, NHS centre and retail. The team was appointed to undertake works on the Community Hub.
- **Town centre road network and pedestrian thoroughfare improvements**  
- utilising Levelling Up Funding (LUF) to explore potential works.
- **Colchester crematorium**  
- feasibility work and business cases to review options for relocation of the existing crematorium, currently located within the town.
- **Fieldgate Quay feasibility study**  
- the team's work to appraise options of various proposals to repair the failed quayside sheet piling carried out in early 2022 led to full project management for the works throughout all RIBA workstages.

- **Colchester Northern Gateway Pumping Station**

- Amphora has been appointed to ascertain required upgrades to ensure the facility is suitable and sufficient for both the new Colchester Northern Gateway South (CNGS) development and adoption by Anglian Water. Once the required upgrades have been identified, it will then be necessary for Amphora to appointment specialist contractors and manage the works.

### Project Management

At Rowan House, the council's head offices, CATL was appointed to project manage the building's complete overhaul and update which included all heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) and mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) services. In January 2022, the team began the process to commence works from RIBA stage 3 through to RIBA stage 7.

The project completed all internal areas and achieved Building Control sign-off July 2023. CCC has requested additional external works which Amphora will also be managing, due for completion late 2023.

The Council's ambition to develop new 'grow on' creative and digital workspace and a digital

working hub at the former bus depot at Queen Street, took a step forward with the start of demolition of the existing structure which completed in March 2023. This was overseen by CATL in advance of extensive archaeological excavations, prior to construction of the new building scheduled to complete in 2024.

Design and development work also progressed on wider Town Deal funded public spaces at St Nicholas Square and Trinity Churchyard with completion due in 2024. These schemes will provide attractive accessible public space to enhance the look and feel of the town centre and offer much needed new space for events, markets and outdoor dining at St Nicholas Square. The peaceful green space at Trinity Square will provide new spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy and help to stimulate economic growth in the town centre.

In September 2021, CATL celebrated the start of works on the new Stanway Lakelands Community Centre located on the western approach road. The building offers a main hall with a sprung floor, space for a community café/function room, plus office and meeting space. It will be fully accessible and include a Changing Places facility, hearing loop and inclusive playground outside. The building completed in November 2022 and is let to a local community organisation.





# ESTATES AND ASSET MANAGEMENT 2022/23

CATL provides high quality estates and asset management services to Colchester City Council (CCC) for its diverse operational and investment portfolios. In addition, it offers a range of specialist consultancy advice to all departments within the Council and secures additional income for the company through its specialist valuations.

The service's dedicated team of professional Chartered Surveyors and technicians continues to focus on maximising and generating new income from CCC assets, increasing capital receipts and providing our parent company (CCC) with high quality advice on the effective use of its property portfolio, which has become even more important following the Covid-19 pandemic.

During 2022/23, the team successfully managed CCC's property investment portfolio worth c.£41 million, maintaining over £3million of income for the Council. The team has continued to identify and secure asset management initiatives bringing in a substantial total capital receipt to the Council of nearly £1million with a further £750k identified or in solicitor's hands.

The team has been involved in several high profile transactions including the letting of 20,000 sq ft at Rowan House to Essex County Council securing substantial rental income and cost savings for the Council and the co-location of one of its key partners; the sale of the Gosbeck's office which became surplus to operational requirements; agreeing terms with a CIC (Community Interest Company) for the new Stanway Community Centre,

an accessible and inclusive community facility, and securing the sale of a site for the development of a local convenience store and children's nursery, both of which will provide facilities for the new homes at the former Severalls hospital site.

Estates has also played a key lease advisory role in the £65m Colchester Northern Gateway Leisure Park with a Cineworld 12 screen cinema, a 90 bed Travelodge, Wendy's and Gregg's drive-thrus, Hollywood Bowl, Puttstars Golf, 8 restaurants including Kervan Kitchen and Kaspers, a high-quality landscaped piazza and parking for 750 cars – including electric car rapid charging points.

Throughout the year, the team has also dealt with the marketing and negotiation of over £20m worth of land and property for disposal and supported community initiatives through consultancy work.

Maximising asset performance is a priority for the Council. As well as ensuring income streams were maximised and costs minimised, the Estates team has provided consultancy advice and input into the instruction by CCC of external consultants to undertake a refreshed Asset Management Strategy.



# HELPLINE

Helpline 24/7 continued to deliver a high-quality monitoring and response service to vulnerable residents across Colchester and North Essex, 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

The aim of the team during the last year has been to support our NHS colleagues at a time when many other providers were failing to attend to their customers' needs, resulting in added pressure and workload for the emergency services. The remarkable team effort meant Helpline delivered this vital service without fail, providing valuable support to over 3,000 customers.

Helpline 24/7 has been growing its customer base across North Essex with 1 in 7 customers now located outside of Colchester, predominantly within the Tendring area and the team attends the locality daily.

The team also expanded its services across the wider healthcare sector and North Essex having been awarded the North Essex Falls Service by the Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board working in partnership the Urgent Community Referral Service and the East of England Ambulance Service, as well as a range of voluntary and statutory providers to pick up non injured fallers across North Essex. This helped reduce demand on the NHS at a time when it continues to be stretched to capacity and there are extended wait times for ambulances.

Our dedicated falls teams attended referrals through the new falls contract lifting patients in their own homes and removing the need to convey them to hospital. This vital support demonstrates Helpline's wider benefit across the whole health and care provision and we were delighted to be awarded the new contract.

Mark Shorter, Head of Transformation, Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board, said: "We are delighted to commission Helpline 24/7 which, over many years, has demonstrated its capability to deliver an excellent falls pick-up service. The further benefit of identifying support for people who may need extra help to remain independent, will help to improve and maintain the wellbeing of those who might otherwise be facing an uncertain future. We also expect this new contract to help ease the pressure on emergency ambulance teams through reduced callouts and subsequent hospital admissions."

During the last year the team has answered over 40,000 calls from our customers and on average has physically responded to customers where they have fallen across North Essex within 45 minutes.



# COLCHESTER FIBRE

Colchester Fibre was set up in March 2022 to marketise and commercialise the fibre optic and telecommunications assets built during 2019-22 by Colchester Amphora Trading as part of the Government-funded Local Full Fibre Networks Fund (LFFN).

In the LFFN programme Colchester was selected as one of a small number of cities in the UK, to prototype public-private partnerships in accelerating the roll-out of modern, future-proof telecommunications. Some £3.3m of Government funding was secured by Colchester Amphora to create a local authority-led digital business, to take the lead in securing ongoing investment for the improvement of Colchester's digital infrastructure.

The LFFN programme delivered core fibre distribution networks across much of urban Colchester, with the network continuing to expand and now stretching from Stanway to the University, and from the Northern Gateway to Friday Wood. It is one of the largest municipally owned telecommunications infrastructures in the country and has received recognition from the Department of Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) as a successful example of public-private partnership in driving digital infrastructure improvements. It is an enormously powerful infrastructure capable of growing to provide services to tens of thousands of users, and has its own, direct, high-capacity links to Telehouse, the UK's main internet exchange in Docklands, London.

Colchester Fibre sells wholesale and retail fibre services to a wide range of customers and operates the infrastructure on behalf of other service providers wishing to sell services to customers over the LFFN-built network. The network infrastructure further underpins the City's CCTV infrastructure and the successful Helpline



business as it evolves to a fully digital platform. One of the highlights of the year's installations was the bringing of full-fibre connectivity to Colchester Castle, Hollytrees Museum and across Castle Park, delivering hugely improved connectivity for residents and visitors alike. A challenging programme involving works in an Ancient Scheduled Monument, Colchester Fibre worked closely with Historic England to ensure full compliance with all archaeological requirements.

In the last year, almost another £20m in investment was secured from VXFiber, one of Sweden's largest fibre optic network builders, to expand fibre availability across selected parts of Colchester. Some 8000 properties across Shrub End and Berechurch, and a further 2750 in Wivenhoe, now have access to the benefits of full-fibre services. Hundreds of residential customers signed up during the year, in addition to a large number of city centre businesses, including the Mercury Theatre and all of the Council's major sites. At the time of print, Colchester Fibre was preparing to provide services to its first customers outside Colchester, in Ipswich, Braintree and Harlow.

In the coming year, Colchester Fibre will be overseeing the deployment of Colchester's first private 5G network, enabling an exciting Virtual Reality tourism experience at key city centre sites. It is also participating in the construction of the Digital Working Hub on the site of the former bus depot on Queen Street, which will showcase the best-use examples of fibre technology, private 5G, and Virtual Reality technologies.



## CCTV

The City Centre CCTV network is an important surveillance system designed to monitor and enhance security in the City Centre. It consists of a network of strategically placed cameras that capture video footage of public areas, streets, and key locations within the City Centre.

The purpose of this CCTV system is to deter crime, assist in the detection and prevention of offences, and provide a safer environment for residents, visitors, and businesses.

Some of the key features and aspects of the City Centre CCTV network include:

- 1. Camera Coverage:** The network ensures comprehensive coverage of the City Centre, including high-traffic areas, public spaces, transportation hubs, and key landmarks
- 2. Monitoring and Control Room:** The CCTV system is monitored from a centralised control room staffed by trained operators who actively observe the footage, respond to incidents, and coordinate with relevant authorities if required
- 3. Integration with Other Systems:** One really important aspect of our system is the ability to share information with Essex Police when they are responding to emergencies within the City Centre, with the ability to relay live images direct to the force control room and attending officers

- 4. Compliance and Privacy:** The operation of the CCTV network adheres to relevant privacy laws and regulations to ensure the protection of individuals' privacy rights. Appropriate measures are implemented to secure the data and control access to the system
- 5. Maintenance and Upgrades:** Regular maintenance and timely upgrades are performed to ensure optimal performance of the CCTV system. This includes equipment checks, camera calibration, software updates, and replacing faulty components

Overall, the City Centre CCTV network serves as a crucial tool in maintaining security, deterring criminal activities, and providing a safer environment for everyone in the City.

During the year, the team recorded 2,426 incidents, up 108 incidents on last year, which resulted in 238 arrests, up 15 on last year, demonstrating the benefits of the improved digital system.



# COLCHESTER AMPHORA HOMES LTD PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2022/23



## EVENTS & WEDDINGS

The year 2022/23 saw the events industry and in particular Colchester Events continue their upward trajectory following the challenges of the past 3 years, bouncing back with energy and vigor to further develop and establish the event programme in Colchester, Essex and beyond.

Despite extensive competition in the marketplace, both the number of events and those attending them increased from the previous year, more than 944 events and 203,936 attendees across Colchester venues alone.

In the year when Colchester became a City, headline events were well attended and helped boost its profile, of the Borough, in particular Westlife and Simply Red at Castle Park and the hosting of The Women's Tour in June for a second consecutive year attracted thousands of visitors and wide media coverage, helping to promote Colchester nationally as a place to live, work and visit.

Colchester Events was also successful in its inaugural season working with Maldon District Council, delivering events in partnership with the neighboring authorities and generating substantial external income into the business.

Sellout shows at Charter Hall included Jack Whitehall and Sarah Millican to name but two. The venue hosted its first ever, two, back-to-back performances in one evening resulting in the highest grossing comedy show for the venue.

The Ticket continued to be a 'go to' publication for what was happening in Colchester, both in physical



and online formats. Two editions, in May and October, assisted in raising the profile of the City and its entertainment programme.

The 'Enlightened' Christmas light trail premiered in Castle Park and ensured open air event attendee numbers eclipsed previous years.

The delivery of bars services continued to grow with all services across Charter Hall and Town Hall being undertaken internally to maximise financial return with cashless operations.

Existing strong connections with 'Our Colchester' were built upon by delivering both the Business Awards and Christmas Light Switch On.

The Events and Weddings team continued to see strong growth from enquiries to planned events. As the financial year ended, the reality of challenges in the forthcoming year became apparent and so external partner relationships and joined up working came to the forefront.

CATL's events continue to trade successfully under three principal banners: Colchester Events, Colchester Venues and Colchester Weddings.



Colchester Amphora Homes (CAHL) is a housing development company established to deliver new high quality affordable and private homes for the people of Colchester and the surrounding area.

Following completion of the Creffield Villas development last year; a prestigious Victorian property in Lexden, Colchester, which saw the building converted into six luxury apartments, two of which now provide much needed social housing, with a further 2, new three-bedroom family houses constructed within the grounds. These high-quality properties marked the first of CAHL's developments to have reached the market. Marketing is continuing to deliver the sale of the one remaining apartment.

At Colchester Northern Gateway – South, CAHL is seeking to deliver up to 350 new homes, which include 30% affordable housing, all to be connected to the low carbon district heat network delivered by the Group. Following on from the successful outline planning granted in December 2022, CAHL is working to support the authority to deliver an appropriate strategy for the residential parcels of the project.



During Q1 2023 CAHL commenced a strategic review of the business and completed a stage 1 strategic land review of the CCC portfolio which whilst in its early stages, looks to bring forward several large new potential projects for CCC with a target to undertake a submission response to the call for sites in the new Local Plan later in 2023.

CAHL has supported CCC in an Intelligent Client capacity, assisting with the private purchase of two new sites for their portfolio in Colchester, on Military Road and in Blackheath.

Construction also completed on the redevelopment of a former residential property at Military Rd, Colchester where CAHL project managed the build of six one and two-bedroom apartments, plus two new two-bedroom houses. The project, which yielded 100% affordable units for social housing, completed in September 2022.

Redevelopment of the former garage sites in Colchester continued at Buffett Way and Scarfe Way, with works completing in January 2023. The transformation of these sites into two and three-bedroom homes, all built to the Government's Future Homes Standards, is increasing the supply of affordable rented homes in the city, supporting the council's efforts to tackle local housing need.

With continued focus on improving the availability of homes for private sale and affordable rent for local people, CAHL worked closely with the City Council to identify a third phase of garage sites suitable for development. Following local consultations, planning permission was achieved in July 2022 for five sites across the city: Cross Cottages, Boxted; Hedge Drive, Shrub End; and Prospero Close, Veronica Walk and Wheeler Close in Greenstead. Together these will yield a further 23 properties for social housing with anticipated completion in 2024.



# COLCHESTER AMPHORA ENERGY LTD PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2022/23

Colchester Amphora Energy (CAEL) develops and implements low carbon energy projects and provides energy consultancy in North Essex, primarily to Colchester City Council working with its Sustainability and Climate Challenge groups and advising on energy aspects of development projects.

During 2022/23 work has continued on the delivery of the Council's flagship project to install a low carbon District Heat Network at Colchester Northern Gateway with completion of the detailed design in preparation of the installation go ahead, when land sales have progressed sufficiently to confirm an 'anchor load' for heat supply sales.

This innovative scheme will provide a low carbon heat solution to residents, businesses and other commercial users. The project will deliver 5.5 GWhrs of heat a year, of which in the region of 75% of hot water for heating and washing will be generated by the heat pump. It is the first of its kind to be used on this scale in the UK, using a confined chalk aquifer, and is a key element in meeting the Council's climate change ambitions.

Development of a microgrid project at the Northern Gateway with solar PV and battery storage has progressed with tendering and contracting a consultant to provide further development services including outline design, planning and financial modelling. This potential project will provide the development with electricity generated from its own 6 MW PV solar farm and battery storage to help reduce the development's carbon footprint ahead of the National Grid's decarbonisation. This will also create an income stream for the Council and potentially lower prices for those in the microgrid.

CAEL continues to explore new areas of business, working with the Council to look at new energy projects to meet its 2030 carbon targets.



## LOOKING *ahead*



This and previous annual reports have reflected how much has been achieved by Amphora in recent years, which is testament to the skills and commitment of the staff who work for the companies.

Looking forward, there is a need to take account of changes in the external environment in which the City Council as our shareholder, and the Amphora group of companies themselves, operate. The wider economic climate over recent times has been characterised by rising costs and interest rates and softer property values. Residents of Colchester have been impacted by the 'cost of living' crisis and many have turned to

the Council for help and assistance, particularly those who are struggling to find homes in which they can afford to live. This has placed added strain on the City Council's resources at a time when its own costs have been impacted by raising energy prices and wider cost pressures. All this impacts on the Council's ability to accommodate risk and Amphora as a group of wholly owned Local Authority Trading Companies must adjust to respond to this.

Therefore, Amphora together with the Council, are actively reviewing the future strategy for each of the companies and this may result in some changes to their operation.

This review is a focus on the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives and how best these can be achieved. This may lead to some adjustments to the way in which the skills within Amphora are deployed but we can look forward with confidence and enthusiasm, based on the agility and ingenuity already demonstrated by our staff.

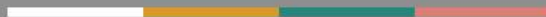
### Richard Carr

Managing Director (Interim)





Colchester  
COMMERCIAL HOLDINGS



[www.colchesteramphora.com](http://www.colchesteramphora.com)

