

# Colchester Northern Gateway Master Plan Vision Review

June 2017

GILLESPIES



**VIBRANT**  
**PROSPEROUS**  
**THRIVING**  
**WELCOMING**

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>8</b>
Purpose of the Report	8
Strategic Position	9
Overview of the Process	11
2012 Master Plan Vision	12
Southern Area Framework	13
Reviewed Master Plan Principles	14
<b>Key Principles</b>	<b>18</b>
Master Plan Concept	18
Master Plan Elements	20
Master Plan Plots	27
Buildings and Views	28
Amenities	30

<b>Design Guidance</b>	<b>36</b>
General Height	36
Hierarchy of Frontage	37
Public Open Space Hierarchy	38
Pedestrian Circulation	40
<b>Zone by Zone Character Areas</b>	<b>44</b>
Local Plan Preferred Options Proposals	44
Sport and Recreation	46
Commercial Leisure	47
Employment	48
Homes	49
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>50</b>

# Introduction

---

This Master Plan Review for Colchester Northern Gateway has been undertaken by Gillespies on behalf of Colchester Borough Council.

Colchester Northern Gateway is playing an important role in the growth of Colchester as an increasingly competitive place, with a diversified economic and investment opportunity offer. The vision is for a vibrant, accessible, green, leisure orientated, mixed use location in the Borough's prime economic zone.

It will be characterised by a mix of leisure uses, green surroundings and a community heart with a strong public realm to provide focus and a unifying facility for residents and visitors. The intention is to create a new sustainable destination that promotes economic growth and investment for the entirety of Colchester.

The Council commissioned Gillespies to prepare a public realm and urban design strategy for the whole of the Northern Gateway. This will complement the Master Plan and provide further detail on key structural elements such as the proposed Boulevard.

Further work on the concept, design guidance and delivery of the Boulevard will be undertaken in order to bring forward this important piece of public realm.

The aim is to create the feeling of one destination (across the A12) with the northern side having a more informal rural feel and the southern side a more urban parkland setting.



THE SITE: - COLCHESTER NORTHERN GATEWAY COVERS AN AREA OF APPROXIMATELY 112HA, OVER 250 ACRES. THE AERIAL PHOTO ABOVE OF CNG WAS TAKEN IN 2014.

Context

Purpose of the Report

Strategic Position

Overview of the Process

2012 Master Plan Vision

Southern Area Framework

Reviewed Master Plan Principles

## Context Purpose of the Report

This report represents a review of the existing Master Plan Vision for the Northern Gateway, originally published by Colchester Borough Council in June 2012.

The Review suggests a broad set of design principles which has been formally approved by the Council. In planning terms it has weight as a material planning consideration.

The Master Plan Review has the following objectives:

- To present a review of the masterplan vision produced in 2012.
- To identify the urban design and landscape principles and key elements which will achieve the vision and create a distinctive place.
- To define a broad master plan framework as a basis for the development of more detailed proposals in the Public Realm strategy and subsequent site development briefs.



VIEW LOOKING NORTH-EAST FROM THE PARK AND RIDE  
ACCESS ROAD ACROSS THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT SITE

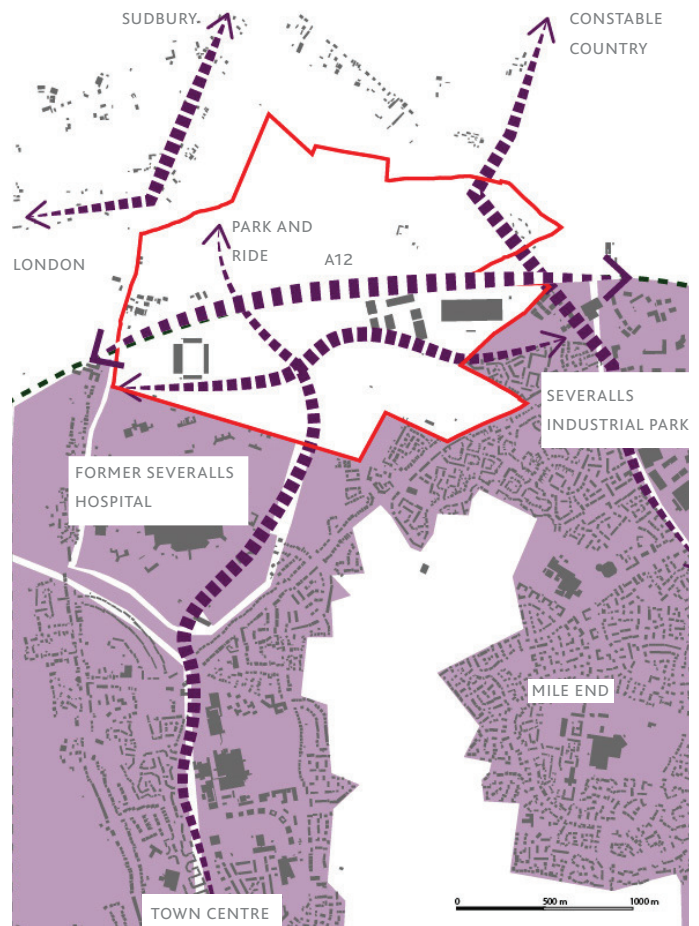


## Context Strategic Position

The adjacent plan illustrates the strategic position of the Northern Gateway in Colchester. The site is situated to the immediate south and north of the A12 which provides an important link to London and the east of England.

The Park and Ride facility gives a direct connection through the Northern Gateway to the railway station and the town centre.

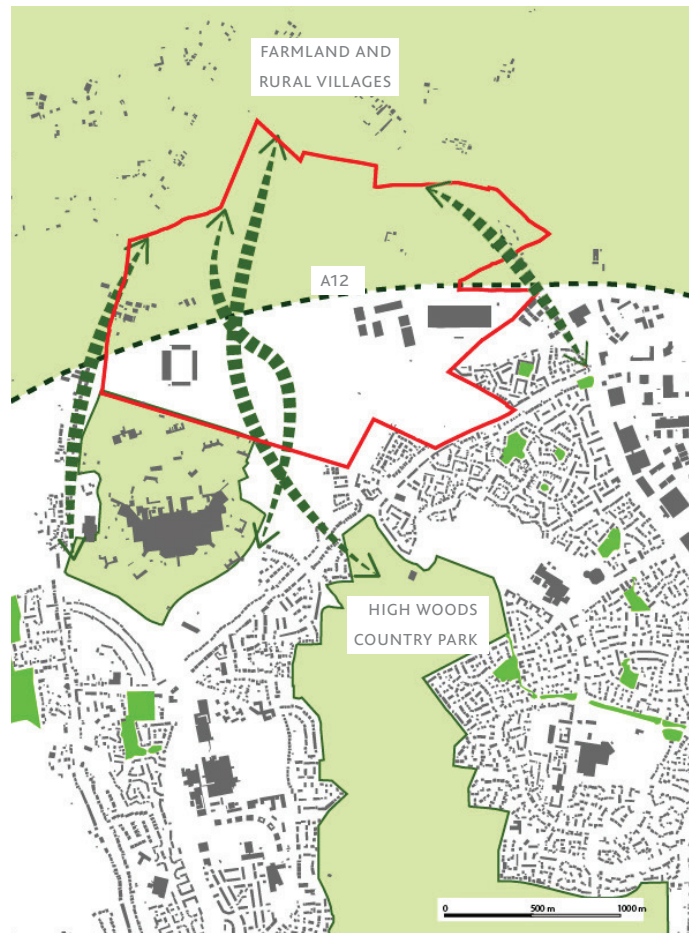
The Council has promoted the Northern Gateway for development for a number of years. With proposals for the former Severalls Hospital site underway there is considerable emphasis on the creation of a distinctive, high quality setting which contributes to the identity and image of north Colchester.



## Context Strategic Position

In addition to excellent road links, the Northern Gateway benefits from connections to a network of green routes, parks and open spaces, north to the Essex Way, and south to the town centre.

It is located in close proximity to large green areas, which make it an ideal link between Colchester and its green hinterland. It is within walking distance of High Woods Country Park and is connected by footpaths and minor roads to the countryside to the north of the A12.



MAIN PEDESTRIAN LINKS

## Context Overview of the Process

---

### 2012 MASTER PLAN

The previous Vision identified a number of key elements that are retained in the Northern Gateway Master Plan:

- Establish a central boulevard which links the sites
- Promote a sustainable movement strategy
- Establish flexible and accessible building plots
- Define a clear framework for key buildings, spaces and views
- Respond to the existing landscape structure
- Use planting to reinforce spaces and connections

### EMERGING SOUTHERN SITE FRAMEWORK

Since publication of the Master Plan Vision in 2012, some plots on the southern side have come forward as planning applications.

The layout of some development has not always aligned with the Master Plan Vision, creating new parameters and constraints. Such changes since the Master Plan Vision 2012 include:

- the implementation of the roundabout on Via Urbis Romanae, which sits uncomfortably with the unifying Boulevard.
- the decision to include the site north of A12 in the Master Plan and to move the Rugby Club and other sports clubs here.
- development proposals for some key sites.

Context 2012 Master Plan Vision



The diagram above indicating land uses is an extract from the first Master Plan prepared by consultants Allies and Morrison Urban Practitioners. The consultants undertook the master planning exercise and held a design workshop during October and November 2011, followed by public consultation in 2014

# Context Southern Area Framework



The diagram above shows the emerging urban framework of the southern site in the first master plan

- FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AREA
- NEW DEVELOPMENT
- EXISTING BUILDINGS
- HEDGEROW / WOODLAND
- VEHICULAR & PEDESTRIAN ROUTE
- A12
- OPEN SPACE

## Context Reviewed Master Plan Principles

---

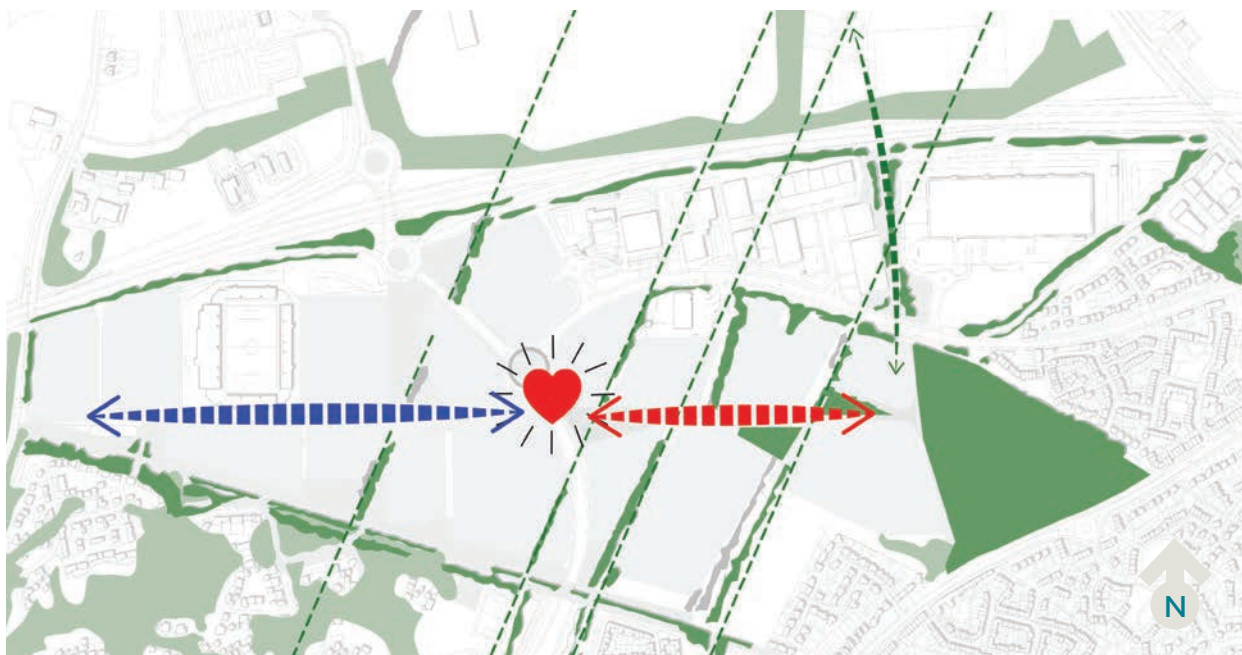
The new site configuration, created by new developments and the decision to retain the roundabout, limits the 'key move' from the 2012 Vision of the Central Boulevard from being established in its previous concept vision.

To adapt and retain the idea of the Central Boulevard it is proposed to establish a two part central spine, comprising The Boulevard to the east, and The Leisure Promenade to the west.

A generous public plaza on either side of the roundabout should be created where these two intersect at "The Circus".

Where possible, it is recommended to retain the existing hedgerows and trees, and follow their lines in any future division of the site into plots.





OUTLINE STRATEGY AROUND "THE CIRCUS"

- ■ ■ ■ THE BOULEVARD
- ■ ■ ■ LEISURE PROMENADE
- — — — HEDGEROW / WOODLAND
- ■ ■ ■ FUTURE GREEN LINKS
- ♥ THE CIRCUS

## Key Principles



Master Plan Concept  
Master Plan Elements  
Master Plan Plots  
Buildings and Views  
Amenities

# Key Principles Master Plan Concept

The Northern Gateway master plan strategy aims for coherent and clear links between the sport, parkland and informal recreational area in the north, and the southern commercial leisure, employment and mixed use residential areas.

At the intersection of The Leisure Promenade and The Boulevard, close to the new public space, The Circus, a pedestrian and cyclists link will lead north toward the Sports complex and Rugby Club with access south towards the High Woods Country Park. The leisure route will benefit from new landscaping, with clearly signposted leisure destinations, spanning the site north and south of the A12. Improvements to pedestrian and cyclist safety across the bridges over the A12 are essential.

Secondary green links, to 'hot spots', other leisure destinations and activities, with potential to be water based in the future if appropriate and viable, are planned to the east of the site, from the new community green space to the recreational facilities to the north of the A12, and along The Boulevard. The public realm and in particular The Boulevard should form a backbone to the development, with focal areas capable of acting as informal community spaces.

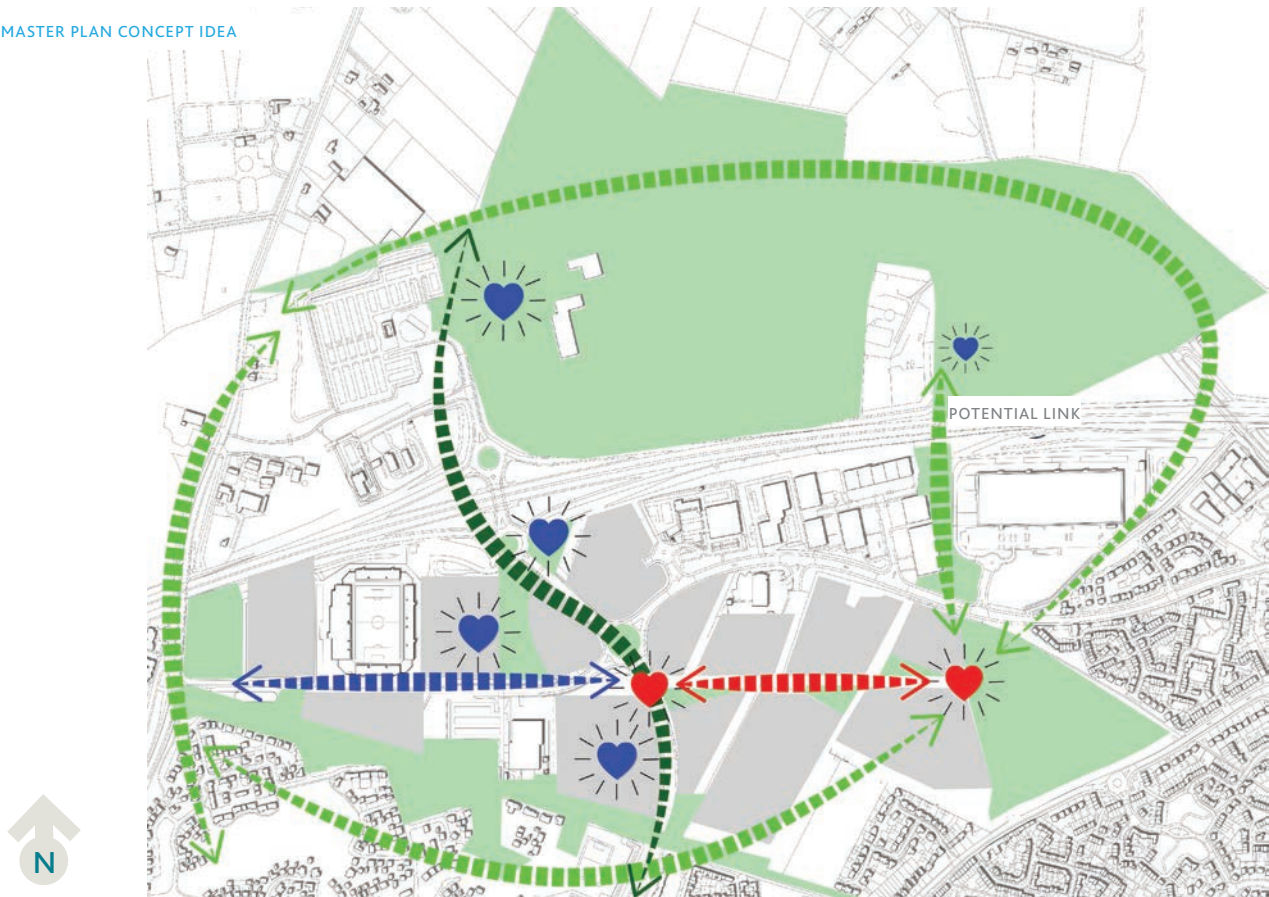
The master plan strategy also requires appropriate site-wide sustainability measures. These include from Photovoltaic (PV) cells to sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) to sustainable development forms with the potential for a localized or district heating system using sustainable energy forms providing heat to developments where feasible.

-  Hot Spots
-  Leisure destinations
-  The Boulevard
-  Leisure promenade
-  Leisure Trail
-  Secondary Green Links
-  Green space



LEISURE PROMENADE

MASTER PLAN CONCEPT IDEA



MASTER PLAN STRATEGY

## Key Principles Master Plan Elements

---

### FOLLOWING EXISTING HEDGEROWS

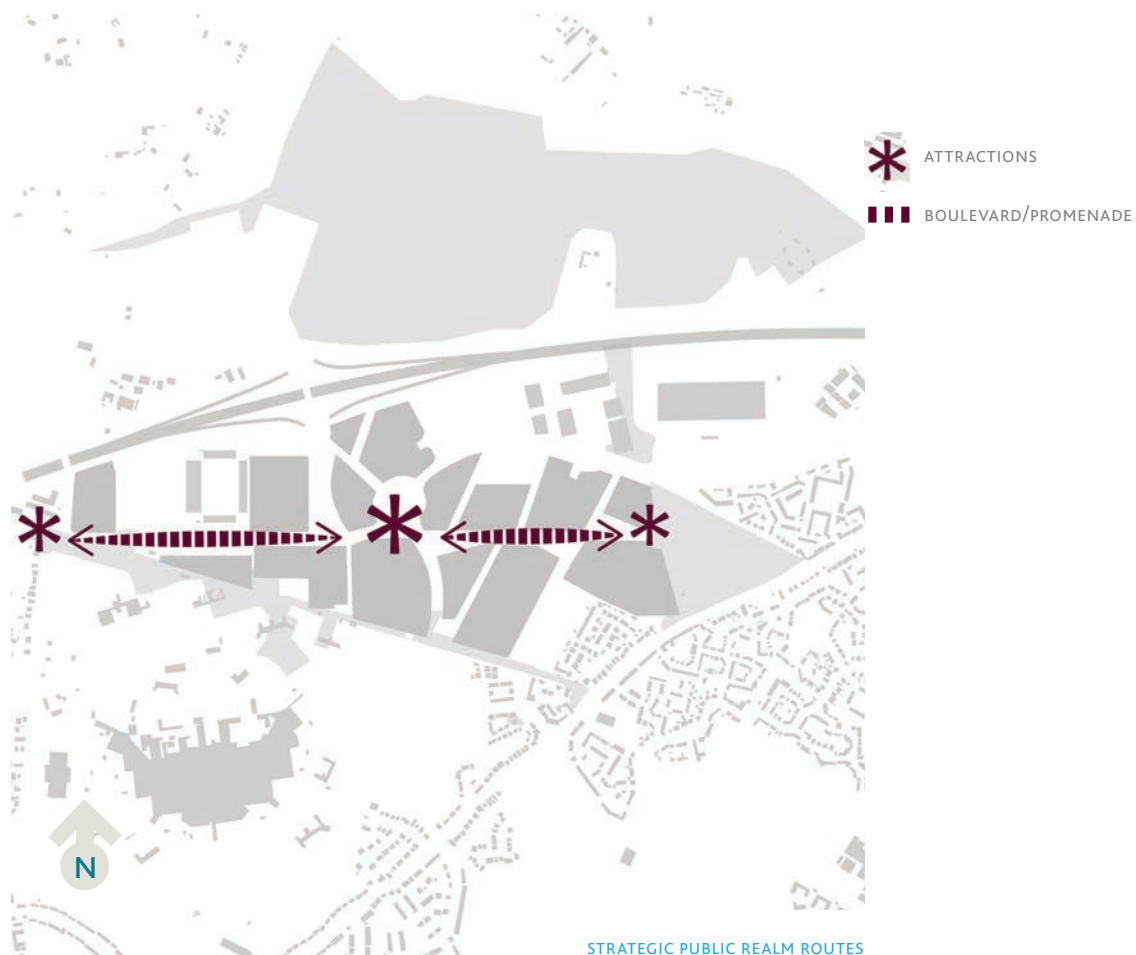
The urban form should respond to the existing landscape structure. The aim is to enhance and reflect as many of the established, historic hedgerows as possible, orientating development plots along these hedge lines provides a natural way to link pedestrian and cycle routes.

### LEISURE PROMENADE + THE BOULEVARD

The central spine of The Boulevard should both read as a single route but have different characters on either side of The Circus. The Leisure Promenade to the west will be more focused on movement between the community stadium, tennis and racquets centre, new cinema, restaurants and leisure activities with parking and be a clear means of accessing these attractions. It will have an open feel and provide clear legibility.

The Boulevard, serving the east, will be a linear route opening up in parts into wider areas to create opportunities for different activities, seating, art, way marking. The proposed energy centre could provide an attraction fronting the boulevard serving also as the locus for the ultra-fast broadband infrastructure as it serves the Northern Gateway.

The Boulevard will be a place to walk and stroll along, incorporating sustainable transport, to sit and socialize, to meet and to be the setting for the commercial and residential uses on each side. It should have clearly defined building frontages with the small open spaces leading from it, allowing for smaller spaces for activities alongside.



# Key Principles Master Plan Elements

## CIRCULATION VEHICULAR, BICYCLE, BUS AND PEDESTRIAN

The diagram illustrates the dominant movements.

The ability to move around easily within the northern gateway is key to the success of the scheme, the ability to move between attractions both as a pastime in itself, to access employment or to participate in a new leisure pursuit.

Moving around and becoming familiar with the area will be beneficial to creating a single 'place'. Public transport routes will be enhanced through support from new development. Promoting the Park and Ride will encourage movement from further afield. The route should include additional stops at key locations close to The Circus and/or on the Boulevard as appropriate.

The routes provide opportunity for prominent artworks such as at nodes or using the A12 bridges as the framework for art.

Where routes cross and create nodes or along informal routes, to assist way marking and interpretation, art work can be integrated in the urban structure and landscape design. At key points it should be designed to be taller than the surrounding buildings and visible from some; careful illumination will highlight these features.



## Key Principles Master Plan Elements

### BUS - ROUTES AND STOPS

The main vehicle routes are already established by the current road structure with key north-south routes at the site boundary, Via Urbis Romanae connecting northern and southern parts and to the A12, and Axial Way connecting east-west.

New road links are required to serve the plots to the east of Via Urbis Romanae. Shared surfacing will be considered in areas of predominant pedestrian priority where vehicles can either be limited or controlled through hours of access.

The Boulevard should be pedestrian / cycle only and prioritised with the potential to permit a bus route within the site to enhance accessibility subject to viability and agreement with the transport authorities. Vehicular access to the development plots will be ensured through new secondary streets.

Car parking is to be provided mainly on plot in the southern part of the site, the park-and-ride, sports hall and rugby clubs will have a significant number of spaces in the North. There may be limited or temporary parking for events subject to careful traffic management plans in the north-east off Severalls Lane. The considered use of multi storey car parks is supported as an efficient means of land use with design, safety and accessibility/convenience issues as key.





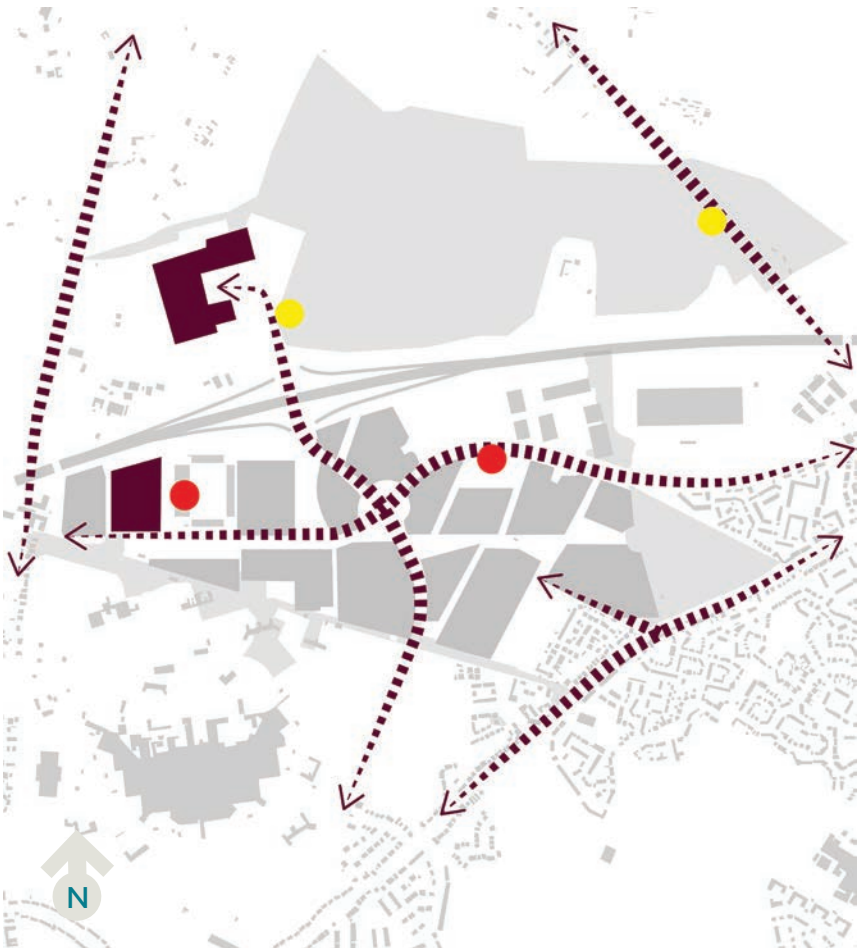
# Key Principles Master Plan Elements

## CAR PARKS AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

The CNG area has two existing electric vehicle charging points and proposes one at the sports hall, multi-storey car park or residential areas and potentially others depending on the future uses in this area.

Electric vehicle charging points (slow and fast) are located at places convenient to car users where there is likely to be a high concentration or drivers will linger a while such as at the proposed cinema, sports hall or residential areas.

- EXISTING CAR PARKS
- EXISTING ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS
- NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS





# Key Principles Master Plan Elements

## WALKING DISTANCE

The movement strategy will provide plenty of opportunities for walking, cycling, horse-riding and jogging. The network will not only aid the connectivity on the site, but will be used for recreation, reinforcing the identity of the Northern Gateway as a leisure destination.



## Key Principles Master Plan Elements

---

### BUILDING HEIGHT AND MASSING

The aim is to create a logical framework for residential, commercial and employment, leisure and landscape elements.

The urban form and density will reduce towards the north-west where the green landscape and sports fields will permeate, punctuated by the sports buildings themselves; they must be of high quality and striking architecture whilst appropriate to a rural setting since their position and accessibility will give them high visibility.

To the south east, generally the destination will become more urban, highest along the western end of the boulevard and on the sites close to the A12 junction 28 site and the stadium; the Circus and Boulevard will become a hub of high activity, density and built form.

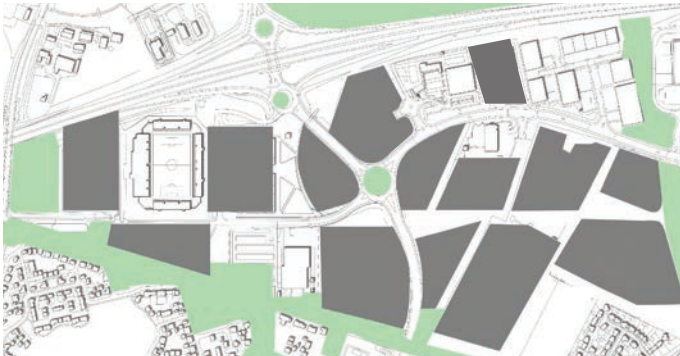
Development Zones are orientated and will be built out to take advantage of the existing hedgerows, dissected by the central spine, with vehicular access to each of the plots.

# Key Principles Master Plan Plots

PARCELS TO BE DEVELOPED



2012 MASTER PLAN PLOTS



REVIEWED MASTER PLAN PLOTS



## Design Principles Buildings and Views

---

Key buildings should be located around The Circus between the Leisure Promenade and the Boulevard, framing the two newly formed public spaces to the south side and the whole of the elevation around the Circus and Axial Way close to the A12. There is opportunity to incorporate a curved form.

Northern Gateway's artwork should be commissioned as new icons for Colchester, marking it in the 'cityscape' and highly visible from the A12. This will enhance the creation of a destination and is important to establishing CNG as a place with prominence. A branding and marketing strategy will incorporate and develop these elements.

Landmark frontage should be located around the Circus and the western end of Axial Way/ Via Urbis Romanae. This will provide a clear arrival point when entering Colchester from the A12, opening the views towards the public plazas and further towards The Boulevard, the Leisure Promenade and the Stadium.



## Design Principles Amenities

The Master Plan is aiming towards the delivery of a mixed use scheme capable of providing a major leisure destination for the town and growth areas. Uses within the master plan need to achieve this aspiration and accord with the objectives; all uses are categorized below:

- Sport and Recreation with community and open space uses
- Commercial Leisure
- Employment and Mixed Use
- Homes and specialist housing

The uses proposed in the Master Plan are primarily employment, leisure and community uses associated with residential, providing meeting places and open spaces are encouraged. These uses focus on the innovative employment sectors particularly those benefitting from ultra fast communication and the prestige location of the Northern Gateway, offering plenty of opportunities for residents and attracting tourists and visitors from the town centre and a wide regional hinterland

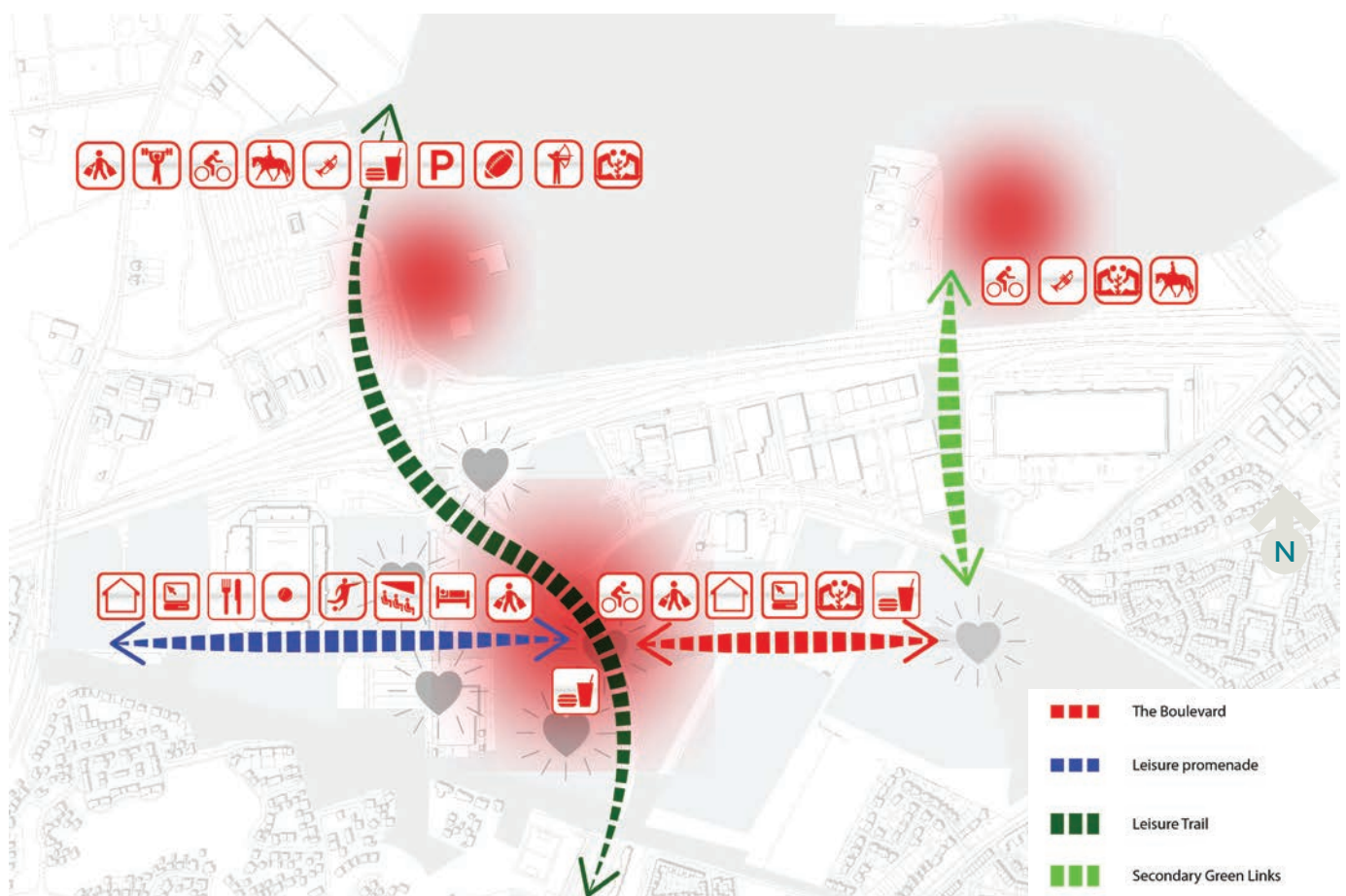
Other uses such as ancillary commercial, potentially mixed with residential uses should be permitted adding to the vitality of the scheme.

Residential development in a range of tenures and types will provide a good mix of accommodation including affordable units and help to ensure a wide range of people can benefit from the proximity of these leisure facilities. Residential densities will be determined as much by the urban form and the desire to create a quality place, taking into account practical issues such as parking and the character of adjoining area. In general, higher blocks will be developed closer to The Circus and along the Boulevard frontages.

This spatial master plan aims to meet current demands for space by individual groups, creating flexible and adaptable spaces to satisfy different needs and creating new places.







## Design Principles Amenities

The destination will be the home for activities over a long stretch of the day, balancing the day and night time offer of sport and recreation, commercial, leisure, employment and mixed uses. This will appeal to a wide range of people and will add to the evening economy.

Colchester Northern Gateway should be an attractive destination throughout the year. It is expected that the spring / summer months will be busy across the area, with the predominant outdoor sports being played in the winter months; activities such as cycle events or organised walks will complement the sport focus in the north with cycling developing as a regional hub.

The external space should accommodate a versatile range of uses and will be attractive at different times of year.



EVENING AND NIGHT-TIME EVENTS USES SUCH AS  
OCCASIONAL CONCERTS AND PLAYS



DAY TIME ACTIVITIES FOCUS AROUND THE PUBLIC SQUARES AND  
COMMERCIAL ENTERTAINMENT USES





# Design Guidance

General Height

Hierarchy of Frontage

Public Open Space Hierarchy

Pedestrian Circulation

## Design Guidance General Height

The majority of the development zones will be 3-6 stories height. Heights could increase for parcels in relation to their context such as between the Boulevard and major traffic routes, at important crossing points and where more commercial uses can be planned such as in association with landmark building.

Parcels to the east and south would generally have lower building heights in order to respond to the greener setting, lower density and residential uses. Heights should generally rise to a maximum height at The Circus, at the Via Urbis Romanae and south of the J28 roundabouts, although occasional higher buildings could be achieved at key points along the Boulevard punctuating the roofline and affording views. A concept development brief for the eastern area between Mill Road and the Via Urbis Romanae will add clarity to how this could be developed to create a viable and active place.

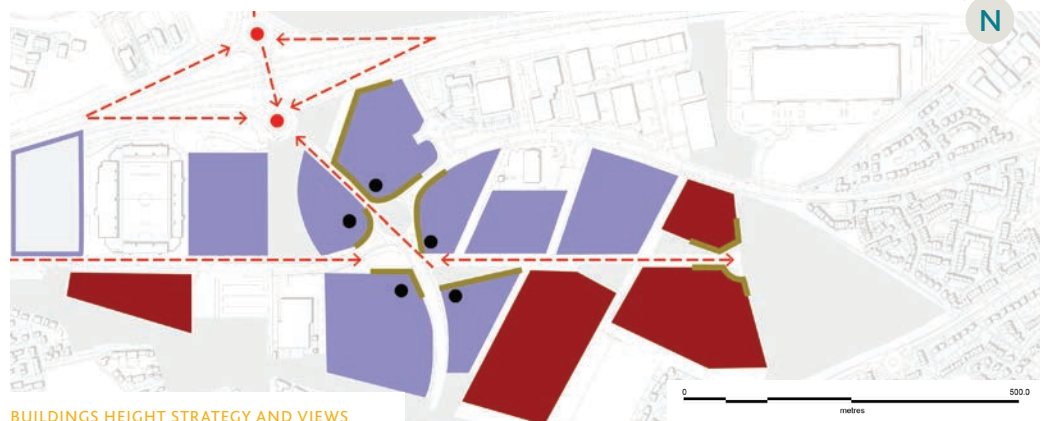
The residential plots would enjoy broadly two types of density: Low/

medium Density Residential: this should be a mixture of housing types with medium plots and garden sizes. It should include a range of house types, including detached and semi-detached and be concentrated in the eastern end.

Medium/higher Density Residential: this would be along the Boulevard where the alignment of buildings should be formal, generally close to the Boulevard edge, creating internal courtyards for privacy where appropriate and with potential for accommodating apartments or specialist housing types and tenures.

Employment uses will be focussed towards the western end around The Circus and along the boulevard with access from Axial Way. Upper floor residential units will be encouraged to help add vitality to the area and to benefit from the nearby employment and leisure uses. A multi storey carpark could be developed with other uses wrapping around it to economise on space for parking for the commercial uses.

- 3 - 6 STORIES
- CAR PARK OR MULTI-TIERED BUILDING
- 2 - 5 STORIES
- LANDMARKS
- STRATEGIC VIEWS
- LANDMARK BUILDING
- LANDMARK FRONTAGE



## Design Guidance Hierarchy of Frontage

Three frontage types are proposed for the Northern Gateway. The building frontage hierarchy will guide the location of elements, such as main entrances, ancillary commercial frontage, fire exits, vehicular access and service doors. The hierarchy will ensure that an appropriate architectural response is made for the facade of each building.

- **Primary frontage:** these are key frontages of particular importance as they face main squares, The Boulevard, and prominent corner positions.

- **Secondary frontage:** these frontages face onto the existing streets and pedestrian thoroughfares. They will incorporate residential entrances, secondary access to commercial and business spaces
- **Tertiary frontage:** found along quieter streets and routes, and in the semi-private areas within blocks.

Design guidance for the frontages along the boulevard in particular will ensure a high quality and consistent approach



## Design Guidance Public Open Space Hierarchy

---

Within the development area south of the A12 there are several new public spaces each to be designed with a different and identifiable character:

- [The Circus](#), and plaza areas to the east and west of the Via Urbis Romanae are the key connective elements, creating a link between the Leisure Promenade and the Boulevard, integrated and creating a sense of one place. It is a focal point, a place of arrival and meeting and orientation, highly visible on arrival from the A12.
- [Community Open Space](#) will create a “Village Green” feel at the eastern end, providing a much needed green space for the existing parishes and new communities, providing a pleasant and lively ‘stitch’ between those communities. It is at the heart of the residential community, providing space for informal recreation, community activities and local gatherings where community meeting space might be accommodated too.
- [Tertiary open spaces](#) will add character to the Boulevard / Leisure promenade and will provide informal gathering and spill-out spaces. Water bodies and features for amenity value incorporating SUDs

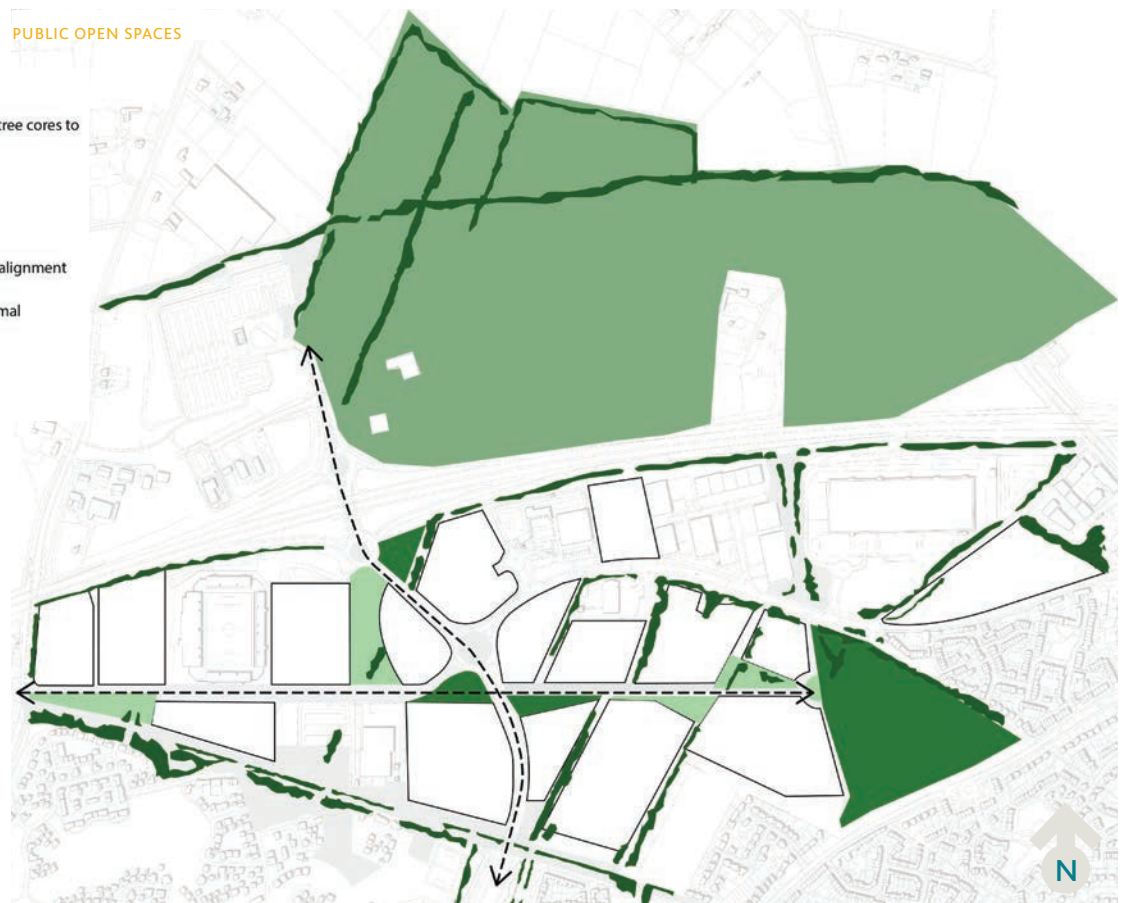
functions as well as potential open water swimming can be included provided safety and maintenance issues are addressed.

- [Tower Lane](#) to the south provides a pleasant walking, equestrian and cycling link and forms part of the green loop that links the north and south sides of the A12.

The emerging landscape and public realm strategy is an integral part of the Master Plan Vision and provides more detail for the public spaces, planting and street furniture, access routes, important corners, views, buildings plots, with a range of appropriate uses and incorporating historic hedgerows, mature trees and the Tower Lane boundary.

# PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

- Development zones
- Areas of hedgerows and tree cores to be retained
- Primary Open Space
- Secondary Open Space
- Indicative primary street alignment
- Parkland, sport and informal recreational area









# Design Guidance Pedestrian Circulation

The Northern Gateway public realm including pedestrian areas will be developed to ensure clarity of use, delineation of space and safety of movement between non - and vehicular traffic. Appropriate signage and material changes will be implemented to ensure safe passage of pedestrian traffic at all times. Tight traffic management will be implemented where there is any sharing of space with buses or car access.

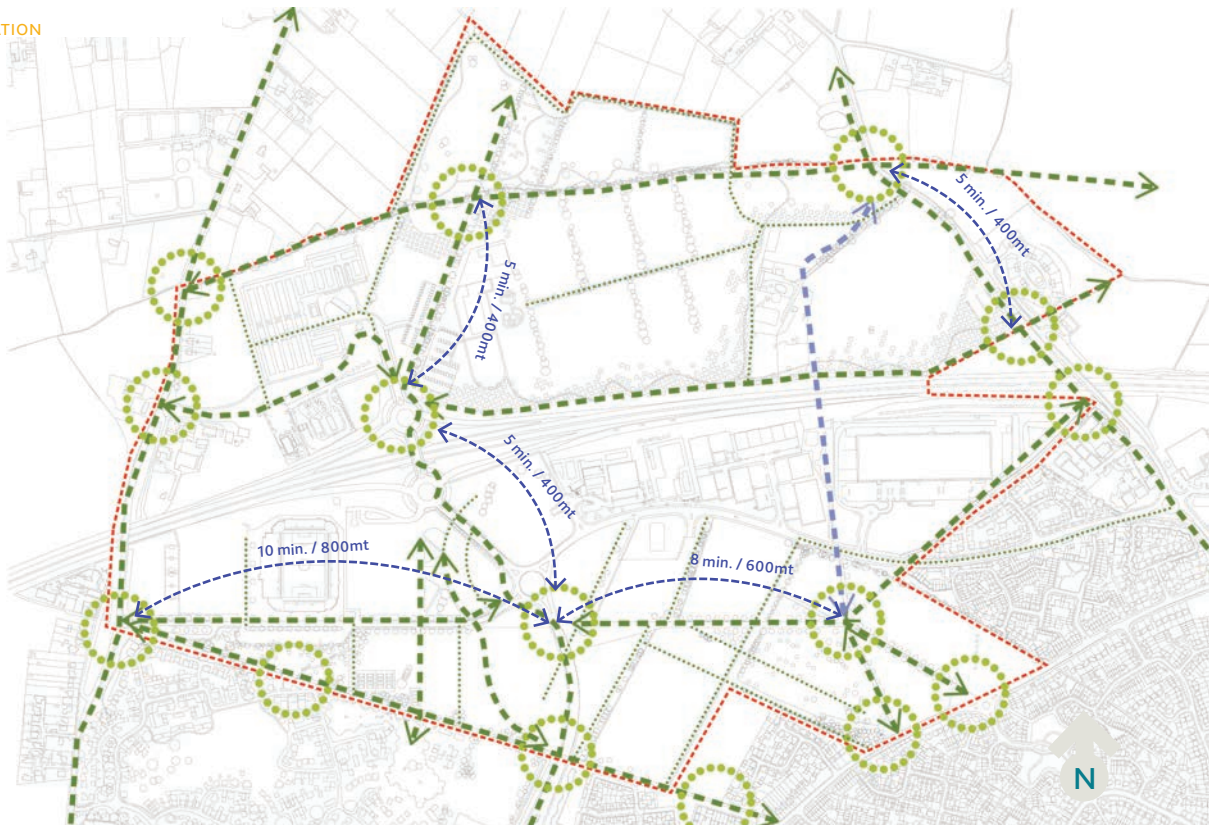
Pedestrian pavements will employ a roughness of material and adequate slip resistance to ensure comfortable and safe walking assisting also people with sight impairment. The use of tactile and hazard warning paving will be proposed in compliance with British Standards and building regulations.

Key pedestrian gateways between routes and primary entry points should be clearly defined through the use of building scale and proportions, using signage and non - verbal clues to aid orientation

- FUTURE PEDESTRIAN ROUTE 
- PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN ROUTES 
- SECONDARY PEDESTRIAN ROUTES 
- PEDESTRIAN GATEWAYS 
- SITE BOUNDARY 
- WALKING DISTANCES 



PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION



# Zone by Zone Character Areas

Local Plan Preferred Options Proposals

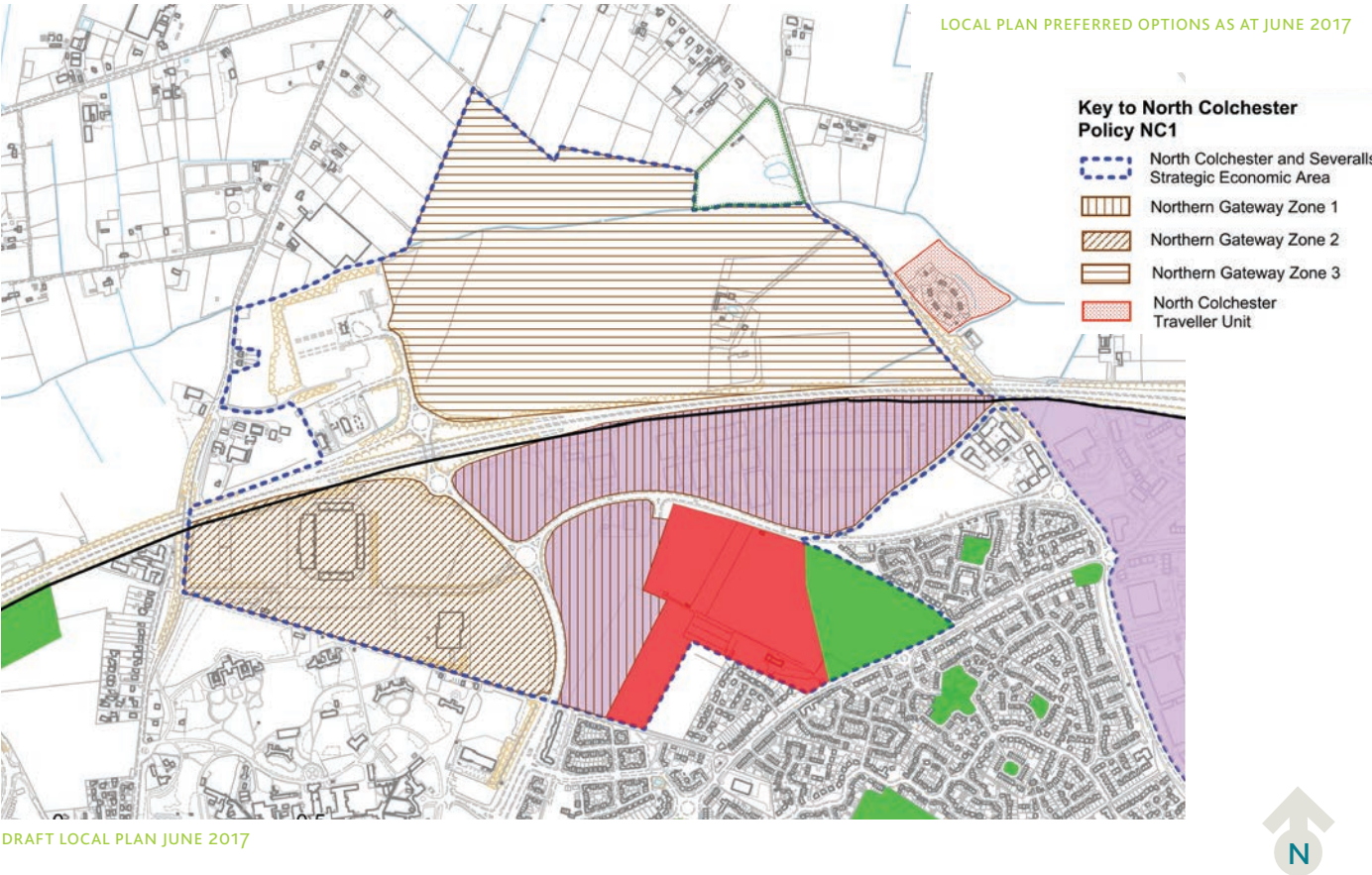
Sport and Recreation

Commercial Leisure

Employment and Mixed Uses

Homes





















# Zone by Zone Character Areas Local Plan Preferred Options Proposals



## Policies Maps



### Key to Policies Maps

	Sustainable Settlement Boundary
	Other Village Boundary
	New Residential Allocation
	Employment
	New Residential-led Mixed Use Allocation
	Public Open Space
	Local Centre
	District Centre
	Garden Community Broad Area of Search
	Neighbourhood Plan Preferred Direction of Growth
	Coastal Protection Belt
	Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
	Environment Agency Flood Zone 3
	Conservation Area
	Site of Special Scientific Interest
	Special Protection Area
	Special Area of Conservation
	Local Nature Reserve
	Local Wildlife Site
	Scheduled Monument

# Zone by Zone Character Areas Sport and Recreation

Examples of Boulevard uses and design incorporating cycling and activity areas routes

Design guidance for the boulevard will ensure consistency of adjoining development and the creation of a distinctive place.



EXAMPLE OF BOULEVARD





## Zone by Zone Character Areas Commercial Leisure

Commercial activities should be located around The Circus or on the ground or lower floors of buildings fronting The Boulevard as well as on plots fronting Axial Way and the Via Urbis Romanae. These uses will add significant employment in this principal economic zone in Borough. They will complement other leisure and residential uses in the Colchester Northern Gateway.

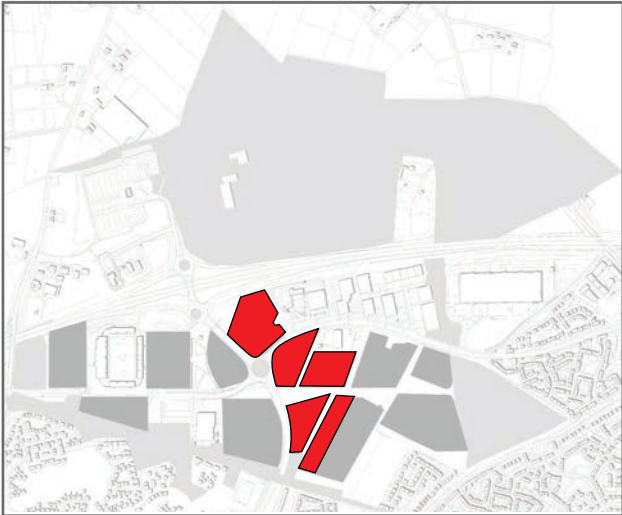
There will be no strong retail presence along the boulevard and any retail will be ancillary to the prime use e.g., cycle hire shop adjoining the sports complex.



EXAMPLE OF PUBLIC CENTRAL SPACE



# Zone by Zone Character Areas Employment



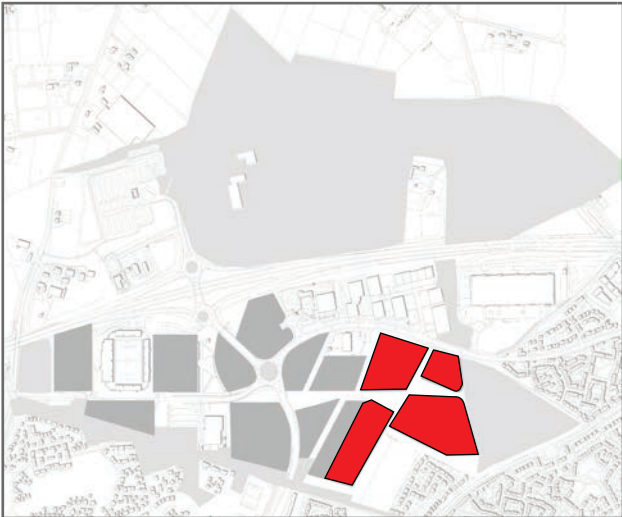
EXAMPLE OF MULTI-STORY PARKING



EXAMPLE OF PUBLIC SPACE ALONG THE BOULEVARD



# Zone by Zone Character Areas Homes



ACCORDIA MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT IN CAMBRIDGE



EXAMPLE OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN DRAINAGE SYSTEM (SUDS) WITHIN THE RESIDENTIAL AREA



ACCORDIA MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT IN CAMBRIDGE

# Conclusion Next Steps

This Masterplan Strategy consolidates current development proposals, economic proposals and the updated Vision for the whole Northern Gateway as a regional leisure destination.

Together with the Public Realm Strategy this document is the first step towards developing more detailed guidance for the sites, expanding on the initial master planning concepts established in the 2012 Vision and bringing the Vision together in a comprehensive redevelopment of the area.

The next steps are:

- To develop more detailed guidance for the development of key



MASTER PLAN STRATEGY

areas, based on initial master planning concepts showing building massing and heights, uses, access and public space as well as design guidance as required

- Market and promote the area, the 'brand' and the vision. Engage with investors, operators, and employers together with the local community respondents and sports participants
- Prepare planning applications for the development plots that take on board the ideas in this document and reflect the Local Plan designations with a view to bringing about change and prosperity to the area to develop its Gateway role over the next 5-10 years.



NORTHERN GATEWAY PUBLIC REALM STRATEGY



GILLESPIES

REVISION NO.	ISSUE DATE:	PREPARED BY:	APPROVED BY:
05	12/06/2017	CATERINA AVITABILE	GORANA SHEPHERD
OX5426 COLCHESTER NORTHERN GATEWAY			GILLESPIES