



WHITE COLNE PARISH COUNCIL

White Colne Village Hall, Bures Road, White Colne, CO6 2QA.

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BACKGROUND PAPER – 15.07.2025

Please note supporting information regarding the following Agenda items:

Item 7v Parish Councillor Allowances

Proposal to Introduce a Councillor Allowance Scheme

An annual allowance for councillors is in line with powers granted under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

- Encourages wider participation, especially from those balancing work, family, or caring commitments.
- Recognises the time commitment involved in council duties — attendance at meetings, reading papers, liaising with residents and officers.
- Improves retention and recruitment: most new councillors serve out of goodwill, but recognition may help remove practical barriers.

Benchmarking

Council	Basic Allowance	Chair/Mayor Allowance
White Colne (proposed)	£240	£350
Coggeshall PC	£120	£500
Earls Colne PC	£nil	£500
Great Tey PC	£nil	£100
Halstead TC	£nil	£500

Why £240 per year?

This equates to roughly **£30 per meeting** (assuming 8 per year – 6 scheduled, annual electors and one EGM) is intended to be **symbolic but meaningful**. It's a step up from purely token figures like £120 but remains affordable and proportionate when compared with similar councils.

- It positions White Colne as **progressive**, but not excessive.
- It keeps the **annual budget impact modest** (around £1,790 per year for 6 councillors plus Chairperson).
- The allowance can be declined by any councillor who wishes not to accept it.
- The allowance would be run through payroll (potential PAYE implication).
- This scheme is intended to be **piloted for one year**, with an annual review to assess its value.

Item 8i PLANNING APPLICATION 25/01405/HH

An historic application for equestrian use of land adjacent to the proposed development site is available at: [19/00645/FUL | Proposed domestic equestrian arena | Land Adjacent 35 Colne Park Road White Colne Essex](#)

Item 8iv BDC Local Plan: White Colne

At time of writing, Minutes of the Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting held on 25th June 2025, at which White Colne was discussed under Agenda item 11 (attached at Appendix i), are yet to be published.

Item 8vi Designated parking request on Colne Park Road / Village Green

My Elderly father 12.04.2025

Hello,

My Dad is [REDACTED] who lives at [REDACTED] white Colne For many years my dad has parked along the top of white Colne green, recently though he is finding it increasingly difficult to walk even small distances and he is having issues with cars and vans parking along the top of the green from further away ie Colchester Road etc Then he is unable to get parked close to his house and struggles to walk the distance.

We were wondering if it would be possible for him to have an allocated Disabled parking spot close to his house to ensure he is able to get in and out safely ??

Obviously we are aware no one has the right to park there but I'm just trying to make his life a little easier, he has been a blue badge holder for sometime but obviously he wouldn't leave his car in the carriageway overnight as it would be unsafe for road users and pedestrians I would appreciate you giving it some thought and pointing me in the correct direction as to whom would be able to advise me on this issue

Obviously he would be willing to pay for an area to perhaps be tarmaced and white line painted I just have no idea if this is something that can be done ?

Many thanks for you time and help

Jen Hedger

Re: My Elderly father 28.04.2025

Hi Jen

Sorry for the delay in replying.

It appears that if you have a blue badge then Essex County Council is obliged to create a parking bay for you. However, as there is no room on the highway outside and the land used for parking at the moment is a village green, then a formal disabled parking bay in that position cannot be created. The village green is protected by law and any works to create a bay would be illegal. By way of compromise we wonder if a sign could be erected at the position where your father needs to park asking people not to park there as it is reserved for blue badge parking. It won't have any legal status, nor will it be enforceable, but it may help to relieve the situation.

I'm sorry if this is not what you were hoping to hear but it is quite a tricky situation.

Cllr Jane Taylor

Item 9i Kissing Gate at Anglian Water site

If there is a kissing gate across a public footpath that:

- Has been in place for many years,
- Is not currently needed (e.g. no livestock),
- And restricts access for prams, wheelchairs, or those with limited mobility...

...you can take several steps as a parish council or concerned group to address the situation.

Contact the Highway Authority

Your first step is to report the issue to your local Highway Authority's Public Rights of Way (PROW) team. In Essex, that's Essex County Council.

You can explain that:

- The gate no longer serves its intended purpose (no livestock),
- It presents an accessibility barrier,
- You are concerned it may be an unlawful obstruction if it no longer meets the conditions under which it was authorised (typically Section 147 of the Highways Act 1980).

They can investigate:

- Whether the gate was ever authorised,
- Whether it now breaches accessibility requirements (e.g. fails to comply with BS5709),
- Whether the landowner should be required to remove or replace it.

Ask for an Accessibility Review

Under the Equalities Act 2010, local authorities have a duty to improve access to public rights of way. Gates that unnecessarily hinder access can be challenged.

You can ask for:

- A review of the gate under the authority's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP),
- A replacement with an accessible structure (e.g. a wide self-closing gate or a gap if safe).

Parish Council Options

As a parish council, you could:

- Log the issue formally with ECC PROW and ask for a site visit,
- Include the case in any Parish Paths Partnership (P3) reports if you're part of that scheme,
- Liaise with the landowner (if known) and encourage voluntary removal or upgrade,
- Document any complaints received to demonstrate public concern.

A Note on Longstanding Structures

Even if the kissing gate has been there for "years," that doesn't make it lawful or exempt from current standards. There is no automatic right for a landowner to install or keep a structure across a public footpath without continuing justification.

Sample Wording to ECC PROW (if needed)

We are writing to raise a concern about a kissing gate across a public footpath in [location]. There are no livestock present, and the gate now restricts access for users with prams, wheelchairs or limited mobility. Could the PROW team please review the legal status and continued justification for this structure, and advise whether it should be removed or replaced with a more accessible alternative?

Item 9ii Request for dog bin on Boley Road

We have been asked by residents if we could arrange for a new dog poo bin to be sighted at the top of Boley Road, north of the Church where the Colchester Road footpath exits into the lane.

Quite a few dog walkers use this route, and the bin would be roadside so easy for the dog warden to empty. At present there is no bin anywhere near this part of the village.

Cllr Jane Taylor

Item 9v Overgrown Allotment Plots

As you may be aware the final vacant allotment plot, plot 9, has now been cleared with a brush-cutter and the cut debris contained within the wooden compost bins at the end of the plot. There are now a number of tenanted plots which are overgrown or severely overgrown with a mixture of weeds. Over the past few weeks the condition of these plots has been brought to my attention by a number of allotment holders and now that allotment plot No9 was been cleared I consider we have a number of options open to us:-

Option 1; Do nothing; this is by far the easiest but does not address the concerns of those allotment holders close to or adjoining these overgrown allotments.

Option 2; Write to all allotment holders pointing out that whilst some are in a good or excellent state of cultivation, a number require attention in order to meet condition 2.3 of the allotment agreement. The allotments of concern are not mentioned specifically within the letter but all allotment holders will know which plots are currently overgrown.

I know this was tried in late summer of 2023 minute (594/23) and whilst it received a mixed response it did not achieve its desired result with the overgrown allotments remaining overgrown. In addition there was some negative feedback from some allotment holders who asked 'why have I received this letter?'

Option3; Write to the allotment holders with overgrown plots but specifically word the letters to target the issue that is unique to their plot.

Cllr J Wilson

Allotments 04.07.2025

Dear Jim

There are three allotment plots rented out but not being worked, and haven't been for a long time. They are badly overgrown and not only unsightly but allowing weed seeds to be constantly blown over neighbouring plots. Needless to say, the paths round these plots are not being cut either which isn't making access easy.

The plots in question are numbers 13, 18 and 10/11.

As the holders of these allotments are clearly in breach of the tenancy agreement, could we ask that you take action to rectify the situation please?

Best regards
Kelly Adams
Paul Adams
Ian Rampling

Item 15 STAFF PENSION SCHEME

Information generated by AI. Further information will be given at the meeting.

To set up a staff pension scheme for your clerk, you'll need to comply with the legal duties under the **automatic enrolment rules** set out by The Pensions Regulator (TPR). Here's a step-by-step guide tailored to your situation:

1. Assess your legal duties

Even if your clerk already has a pension, as an employer, you **must assess** them for automatic enrolment.

- **Age:** If the clerk is aged **22 to State Pension Age** and earns **over £10,000 per year** (which they do), they must be **automatically enrolled**.
- If they're **under 22 or over State Pension Age**, or earn **less than £10,000 but more than £6,240**, they can **opt in** to the pension scheme, and you must pay contributions.

Since your clerk earns **£11,980/year**, they must be **automatically enrolled**.

2. Choose a pension scheme

You must set up a **qualifying workplace pension scheme**. If your clerk has an **existing pension** that **previous councils paid into**, it's possible (and often advisable) to use the same provider **if**:

- It's a qualifying scheme for automatic enrolment, and
- The provider accepts continued contributions from a new employer.

Common options used by parish councils:

Scheme	Notes
NEST (National Employment Savings Trust)	Government-backed- No setup cost- Easy for small employers Widely used by parish councils. Accepts all employers.
LGPS (Local Government Pension Scheme)	Defined benefit (DB) scheme- High-value pension Only available if your council is an eligible admitted body . Very few small parish councils join unless already in.
The People's Pension	Low cost- Good admin tools Also popular in small councils and charities.
Smart Pension	Easy setup- Integrates with payroll software May be useful if using cloud payroll systems.

3. What should you do now?

a. Check the clerk's existing pension

Ask the clerk for details of their **existing pension** scheme (e.g., NEST, LGPS, etc.). If it's a scheme like NEST or The People's Pension, you might be able to just **contribute into their existing pension pot**.

b. Set up or join a pension scheme

If the existing scheme can't be used or you'd prefer a new one, then:

- Consider using **NEST** – it's free to set up and designed for this situation.
- Register as an employer on the NEST website:

<https://www.nestpensions.org.uk>

c. Make contributions

You must contribute **at least 3%** of qualifying earnings. Your clerk contributes 5%, for a total of 8%.

For example:

- **Qualifying earnings** in 2025/26: between £6,240 and £50,270
- So for £11,980 salary:
- Qualifying portion: £11,980 - £6,240 = £5,740
- Employer: 3% of £5,740 = **£172.20/year**
- Clerk: 5% of £5,740 = **£287/year** (usually deducted pre-tax)

You can **choose to use total earnings** rather than qualifying earnings – simpler, but potentially slightly more expensive.

4. Declare compliance

Once the pension is set up and contributions begin, you must **declare compliance** with The Pensions Regulator. This can be done online at: <https://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk>

Summary of Recommendations

- **Check if the clerk's current pension can be used** (likely best if it's NEST or another qualifying DC scheme).
- If not, consider setting up a free NEST account for your council.
- Ensure the right level of contributions.
- Declare compliance with The Pensions Regulator.

Report Title: Local Plan Review – Site Allocations and Inset Maps – White Colne	
Report to: Local Plan Sub-Committee	
Date: 25th June 2025	For: Recommendation
Key Decision: No	Decision Planner Ref No: N/A
Report Presented by: Katerina Zangelidou – Planning Policy Officer	
Enquiries to: Katerina Zangelidou – Planning Policy Officer	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Braintree District Council is required to review its Local Plan every 5 years. Part of this review process is to conduct a Call for Sites exercise, in which developers, landowners and their agents submit sites to be considered for allocation in the Local Plan. This report will look at proposed site allocations in the village of White Colne. In addition, the existing inset map has also been checked and amended when required.
- 1.2 Development proposals on site allocations will require planning permission. An allocation at this stage is draft and could be removed at a later stage of the Local Plan process, for example if a piece of evidence base indicates that a site is not suitable for development. A development site is only recommended for allocation if, at this stage, the proposal would be in general accordance with planning policy.
- 1.3 In line with the statutory plan making process, Braintree District Council intend to conduct a preferred options consultation in the Autumn of 2025. The responses to this consultation will be report back to the Local Plan Sub-Committee, and if necessary further amendments will be made prior to pre-submission consultation in 2026.
- 1.4 This report includes the inset map for the village of White Colne.
- 1.5 In terms of housing and employment provision, no sites are proposed for allocation. One of the submitted sites is of 1 ha or less in size. One of the sites was considered as self-build but was not allocated.
- 1.6 Further evidence is required to support any draft allocations in terms of highways, heritage, landscape, trees and infrastructure.
- 1.7 Comments submitted by the Parish Council have been reviewed and taken into account as part of the site assessment process.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Recommendation 1: That the inset map for the village of White Colne is approved for public consultation.

2.2 Recommendation 2: That site WHIC2302 - Land north of Colchester Road, White Colne, is not allocated for residential development.

2.3 Recommendation 3: That site WHIC2306 - The Meadow, Colne Park Road, White Colne, is not allocated for residential development.

3. Summary of Issues

3.1 White Colne Settlement Overview

3.2 White Colne is designated as a Third Tier Village within the Braintree District settlement hierarchy. The village retains a distinctly rural character, with a dispersed settlement pattern primarily aligned along Colchester Road. The built environment comprises a mix of historic cottages, 20th-century homes, and more recent infill development. Several properties occupy elevated positions overlooking the river valley, enhancing the village's scenic quality. Its low-density layout and surrounding agricultural landscape reinforce a strong sense of rural identity.

3.3 The settlement holds considerable historic significance, with origins traceable to prehistoric times and a mention in the Domesday Book. St Andrew's Church, a Grade II* listed building dating from the 12th century, serves as a prominent village landmark. Numerous other listed buildings and historic farmsteads lie within the parish boundary. The former Colne Valley and Halstead Railway, which ceased operation in 1964, remains a notable historic feature; its former station now serves as the village hall and café.

3.4 Situated within the Colne Valley—an area of high landscape value—White Colne is surrounded by river meadows, ancient woodland, and mixed farmland. The River Colne and its tributaries support rich biodiversity and offer a valued natural amenity. A section of the disused railway line has been designated a Local Nature Reserve, providing habitat for wildlife including bats, otters, and rare invertebrates.

3.5 The classification of White Colne as Third Tier Village reflects its role as a small rural settlement with limited services and infrastructure. It is not identified as a strategic location for growth in either the current or emerging Local Plan.

3.6 Two (2) sites were submitted in White Colne as part of the 2024 Call for Sites process. Both the sites are located outside the development boundary, and each has been assessed about planning history, site access, environmental constraints, and potential landscape impact. Given the rural nature of the parish and its sensitive landscape setting, all sites required careful consideration to ensure alignment with strategic planning objectives.

- 3.7 White Colne Parish Council (WCPC) objects to the inclusion of two potential development sites—WHIC2302 (Land north of Colchester Road) and WHIC2306 (The Meadow, south of 30 Colne Park Road)—in the Braintree District Council Local Plan Review.
- 3.8 Both sites lie outside the defined Development Boundary for White Colne, contrary to the principles set out in the White Colne Village Design Statement, which supports development only within the existing village envelope (except for agricultural conversions).
- 3.9 Site WHIC2302: WCPC raises concerns about the lack of clarity regarding the site's intended use and notes that a public right of way (FP 10 119) crosses the site. The Parish Council also highlights that Braintree District already has sufficient land to meet housing needs, as stated in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).
- 3.10 Site WHIC2306: In addition to similar concerns about location and policy conflict, WCPC references a previously dismissed planning appeal (APP/Z1510/W/19/3229655), where the Planning Inspector concluded that development would harm the character and appearance of the village and countryside. A public right of way (FP 26 119) also crosses this site.
- 3.11 WCPC asserts that neither site is necessary to meet housing targets and recommends both be removed from further consideration.
- 3.12 This section summarises the findings for each site and provides recommendations regarding their suitability for allocation for residential, employment, or other uses in the emerging Local Plan.
- 3.13 Sites submitted for housing and Self and Custom Build

LOCAL PLAN REVIEW REFERENCE CODE	ADDRESS	AREA IN HECTARES (Ha)	CAPACITY (No of dwellings)
WHIC2302	Land north of Colchester Road, White Colne	3.3	82
WHIC2306	The Meadow, Colne Park Road, White Colne	0.7	17
TOTAL		4.0 Hectares	99 Dwellings

3.14 Site Assessment: WHIC2302 – Land North of Colchester Road, White Colne

- 3.15 This site comprises approximately 3.30 to 3.43 hectares of greenfield agricultural land and is proposed for residential development, with an estimated capacity of up to 82 dwellings, phased over a five-year period beginning in 2026. The site is located outside the defined Development

Boundary for White Colne and currently lacks direct access from Colchester Road, with no clear access solution identified. A public right of way (PROW 119_10) runs along the eastern edge and within the site itself.

- 3.16 The site is bordered by hedgerows and slopes northward. It lies entirely within Flood Zone 1 and is proposed to be drained via soakaways and ditches. The northern boundary of the site adjoins a Local Nature Reserve, and it falls within both the HRA Zone of Influence and the SSSI Impact Risk Zone. All services are reportedly available, and the site is fully owned by the promoter. While the site is not constrained by flood risk, its location outside the village envelope, lack of defined access, and proximity to sensitive ecological areas raise significant concerns.
- 3.17 White Colne Parish Council objects to the inclusion of this site, noting that the district already has sufficient land to meet its housing needs, as confirmed in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The Parish Council asserts that the site is unnecessary and inappropriate for development and should be excluded from further consideration in the Local Plan.
- 3.18 Due to the site's position outside the Development Boundary, lack of direct access, environmental sensitivities, and its scale in this location, it is recommended that site WHIC2302 is not considered suitable for allocation in the Local Plan.
- 3.19 Recommendation 2: That site WHIC2302 - Land north of Colchester Road, White Colne, is not allocated for residential development.**
- 3.20 Site Assessment: WHIC2306 – The Meadow, Colne Park Road, White Colne**
- 3.21 This 0.70-hectare greenfield site is currently in agricultural use and has been promoted for self and custom build housing, with an estimated capacity of three to five dwellings. It lies outside the defined Development Boundary for White Colne, contrary to the principles set out in the White Colne Village Design Statement, which supports development only within the existing village envelope. Access is proposed from Colne Park Road, a narrow C-road, with the promoter indicating that improvements would be made to the existing vehicular access. A public right of way (PROW 119_25) runs along the southern boundary of the site, and there is a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) woodland on the western edge.
- 3.22 The site also borders a Local Nature Reserve to the southwest and lies within both the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Zone of Influence and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone. The land slopes towards Colne Park Road, and the northwest portion of the site falls within Flood Zone 3. Drainage is proposed via soakaways. All services are reportedly available, and the site is fully owned by the promoter.
- 3.23 Planning permission for development on this site was previously refused (application 17/01877/OUT), and the subsequent appeal (APP/Z1510/W/19/3229655) was dismissed. The Planning Inspector concluded that development would harm the character and appearance of

the countryside and village, and these concerns remain unaddressed. White Colne Parish Council strongly objects to the inclusion of this site in the Local Plan, citing its unsuitability for development and the enduring relevance of the Inspector's findings.

- 3.24 Given the site's location outside the defined Development Boundary, its proximity to sensitive ecological assets, the presence of a public right of way, and the clear and unresolved concerns raised in a previously dismissed planning appeal, it is recommended that site WHIC2306 is not allocated in the Local Plan.

3.25 Recommendation 3: That site WHIC2306 - The Meadow, Colne Park Road, White Colne, is not allocated for residential development.

- 3.26 The recommendations set out in this report will help the Council to deliver the following Corporate Priorities:

- Communities – our communities can thrive
- Prosperity – our people prosper
- Environment – our environment is cherished

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The site allocations and inset maps will be subject to public consultation in the Autumn of 2025. A further period of consultation will take place in 2026.

5. Options

- 5.1 Preferred Option 1 – To approve the alterations and additions to the inset maps included in this report.
- 5.2 Option 2 – To not approve the alterations and additions to the inset maps.
- 5.3 Option 3 – To change, add or remove alterations and additions to the inset maps.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1 Once all Local Plan updates have been approved by the Local Plan Sub-Committee, a Regulation 18 consultation will take place in the Autumn of 2025 for 6 weeks.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 Production of the Local Plan is covered by the existing Local Plan budget.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 The Local Plan could be subject to legal challenge.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1 N/A

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 creates the public sector equality duty which requires that when the Council makes decisions it must have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 10.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 10.3 The Equality Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

11. List of Appendices

- 11.1 Appendix 1: Inset Maps
- 11.2 Appendix 2: White Colne – Site Maps - Locations

12. Background Papers

- 12.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- 12.2 National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
- 12.3 Braintree District Local Plan 2013 - 2022
- 12.4 Call for Sites Submissions (CFS 2024)



