



Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

Adopted: September 2020



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1 Introduction

What is a Statement of Community Involvement?

This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out our strategy for effectively involving you in planning matters.

Planning affects most people in some way – the homes we live in, the open spaces we enjoy, the leisure facilities we use, and how we travel around.

We are committed to ensuring that we involve the community, interested organisations and statutory stakeholders in planning and development matters which affect them. We want to make it as easy as possible for you to find out how to get involved.

Our Policy on engagement

We have Council-wide policies on how people can stay informed and contribute to the decisions we make about the services we provide.

- Our Consultation and Engagement Strategy sets out our approach to how we will involve residents in a consistent and co-ordinated way, our corporate standards, and the types of approach we use
- Our Chelmsford, Our Plan sets out our priorities for Chelmsford for the next few years. One of the four themes is 'Connected Chelmsford' - bringing people together, empowering local people and working in partnership to build community capacity, stronger communities and to secure investment in the city.

This SCI focuses specifically on planning and how we will ensure the wider policy commitments are included in everything we do.

While we must meet minimum standards for community involvement which are set out in Planning legislation, we want to go further to engage with people and enable the local community to get involved with influencing planning decisions.

We will meet the following principles when we consult and engage with you:

- Ensure our consultation is accessible to all regardless of age, gender, faith, race, disability as well as knowledge and experience
- Explain what we are and are not consulting on and ask for your views as early as possible, and throughout the process, where we can
- Consult in ways which relate to the stage of the planning process, the issues being discussed, the people and groups involved, and the resources available to us
- Use clear, concise and straightforward language and materials in our consultations
- Use digital ways of getting in touch such as use of the internet and social media to make consultation easier, quicker and more cost effective, alongside traditional ways of consultation so those without internet access or skills are fully included

- Listen to everyone's views and take them into account, and give feedback on how consultation has been used.

What is the planning system?

Development is influenced by national and local policies.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's national planning policy. It includes things like use of land, sustainability, good design and managing flood risk.

The Local Plan is our long-term strategy to ensure Chelmsford can meet local needs for new homes, employment, shops, open space and infrastructure like roads and schools. It also includes policies which are used to decide planning applications. It is prepared taking national policy into account.

We also publish additional information on how some of these policies will be used, in Supplementary Planning Documents. At an even more local level, some parishes and communities are preparing Neighbourhood Plans to add detail to Local Plan policies and influence what happens in their area.

Planning applications are needed for most types of development, such as building a house or an extension, or changing the use of land or buildings. We need to approve these planning applications before work can start. They must take all national and local policy into account.

What is the role of the Council in planning?

Council staff and elected Councillors are involved in making planning decisions. We work together in a fair and positive way to secure good development which is sustainable.

Spatial Planning

This team provides the planning framework for Chelmsford through the Local Plan. They develop the Local Plan through significant consultation and engagement with local communities, organisations and statutory stakeholders. This also includes consultation and engagement on Supplementary Planning Documents, strategic masterplans and helping parishes and communities to develop their Neighbourhood Plans.

Development Management

This team receives, considers and decides planning applications. The team deals with thousands of applications every year ranging from extensions to houses right up to large new housing estates and business buildings.

We assess all planning applications against national policy set out in the NPPF and the Local Plan. Specialists within the team advise on listed buildings and conservation, tree preservation and landscaping. We also consult external organisations on technical aspects of an application such as flooding, traffic, and parking.

Although a lot of what we do is required by planning legislation, we try to go further to make sure people can have their say and get involved with planning in their area.

Councillors

Our elected Councillors have a key role to play in the planning process:

Representation

- Listening to and representing the views and concerns of residents on planning applications.

Committees

- Developing policies and monitoring their delivery
- Making decisions on some of the more significant or controversial planning applications and those that cannot be determined by officers under delegated powers.

How will you monitor the SCI?

We want this SCI to be flexible so we can make helpful changes to the way we involve the local community and stakeholders in planning decisions, particularly in relation to greater use of technology. We will monitor this SCI regularly, and if it becomes out of date, we will review it. The Government is also consulting on changes to the planning system, and if this results in any changes to the actions we have set out in the SCI then it will be updated.

Any comments we receive on the way we consult and engage will be considered, and where we can they will be used to improve what we do in future.

Keeping services running

There may be times when we cannot meet all of our commitments due to exceptional circumstances, even though we have listed them in this document. We will always be committed to keeping essential services running but the way we deliver some services may change.

For example, during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 we were not able to display print copies of the document at the Customer Service Centres because it was closed. We were not able to make site visits and put up site notices, but we asked applicants to put up the notices themselves. There may be other exceptional circumstances in the future which prevent us from doing what we have said we will. We will always follow the latest Government advice on how to protect the community and our staff. In the meantime, we will try to use our website and social media more, and conduct virtual meetings and conversations where that is possible.

2 Get Involved with Planning Policy

We produce a number of planning policy documents, all of which involve wide community and stakeholder engagement.

We adopted the Local Plan 2013-2036 in May 2020. The Local Plan is the Council's long-term strategy for Chelmsford ensuring new homes, employment, shops, open space and infrastructure are provided in a sustainable way. It also seeks to protect existing open spaces, heritage, the Green Belt and rural area from unwelcome development - and contains the policies used for deciding planning applications. We consulted on three draft versions using a variety of techniques to capture people's views.

Local Plans must be reviewed every five years, so we anticipate beginning a review of the Local Plan in 2022. We also consult on new Supplementary Planning Documents and Neighbourhood Plans as they are developed. We will set out the timetable for these consultations in a Local Development Scheme being prepared in late 2020.

Who will we involve?

We want to involve as many people as possible in developing planning policy. We try to consult and engage with a cross-section of the local community, who are aware of important local issues. There are also specific groups called statutory consultees and other interested organisations whose views are vital to us when we are developing our policies.

Who are the statutory consultees?

Government legislation tells us that we must consult certain organisations including Essex County Council, neighbouring councils, local parish and town councils, utility companies, health, environmental and transport bodies. We also engage constructively with other councils and interested organisations on strategic matters contained in the Local Plan, under what is called 'the duty to co-operate'. These strategic matters are those where the actions of different councils may impact on others, such as meeting the needs for housing or jobs, or transport infrastructure. We have included a more detailed list of consultees at Appendix 1 of this document.

Which other interested organisations do you consult?

We also consult with other organisations that have an interest in our policies and who can help us with information and ideas. These include business and sports organisations, planning professionals and developers, and voluntary and community groups. We have included a more detailed list at Appendix 1 of this document.

I'm a local resident – how do I get involved?

We have a database of people and organisations who want to be kept informed when we consult and take decisions on planning policy documents. This is called the consultation portal. You can sign up here: <https://consult.chelmsford.gov.uk/portal/>

If you are already registered, you can change your login details or preferences on the consultation portal.

How will you consult people?

There are a number of ways you can get involved with planning policy discussions and decisions. The type of consultation will depend on the topic, who we want to consult, and the timing. Some of the ways we consult people and organisations on specific topics are listed in Section 3.

Awareness

This means letting you know about the work we are doing and how you will be able to get involved. This might include the dates and locations for engagement events, how to find documents and more information, and how to make your comments.

We will

- Write to statutory consultees and other consultation bodies by e-mail or post
- Write to you by e-mail or post if you are registered on our consultation database
- Where legislation tells us to, place a public notice in a local newspaper publicising the consultation or adoption of a planning document.

We may also

- Put up posters and flyers in public places
- Advertise in community newsletters
- Promote consultations in our Council newsletter City Life, which is delivered to homes and organisations
- Issue a media release to local print and broadcast media
- Add information on social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, and RSS feeds.

Information

We want to provide the information you need so you can decide if you want to make any comments.

We will

- Publish planning documents for consultation on our website
- Where there are evidence base documents and feedback reports, publish them on our website too
- Look for innovative ways of providing information using digital versions of documents or summaries of them
- Make a print copy of relevant documents available at our Customer Service Centre during opening hours.

Consultation

We will ask for your views on planning policy matters and provide different ways that you can do this. When we carry out formal consultation, we follow the legislation which tells us what we should do. Sometimes we carry out informal consultation and engagement where we can be a bit more flexible.

Formal consultation is normally for four or six weeks. The minimum period depends on the type of document, and is set out in legislation. If the consultation falls over a holiday period, such as Christmas, we will try to extend the period so that people have more time to have their say.

We will

- Publicise consultation information such as how to comment and when by on our website, with links to important information
- Provide surveys, questionnaires, and feedback forms to make it easy for you to give your views
- Invite your comments via the consultation portal, e-mail or post.

Engagement

Sometimes we want to discuss issues with you in more detail, so we can provide extra information, answer your questions, and get important feedback from you.

We may

- Hold exhibitions in local venues such as shopping centres, village halls, community centres, staffed where we can to enable face-to-face discussion
- Arrange presentations to interested groups such as parish councils, youth groups, residents' groups and civic panels
- Run focused workshops for discussion on specific topics during development of a planning document, such as transport or landscape.

Feedback

All the feedback we receive is recorded and carefully reviewed so that we can identify the main issues from consultation and consider how we can use that to shape our documents.

We will

- Publish a feedback report setting out:
 - Who we consulted
 - How we consulted
 - The number of comments
 - A summary of the main issues raised
 - How the issues have been taken into account.

- Present the feedback report along with the updated document at different stages of preparation to show how the document has continually taken the comments into consideration
- If you made a comment, we will let you know when the feedback report has been published and where you can read it

What about accessibility?

We will always do our best to make sure that documents are written clearly and avoid or explain technical language. Documents will be published on our website where many browsers will enable you to increase the size of the text. There is also a Readspeak service which will read the text of any web page. This can help if you have a visual impairment, have difficulty reading for any reason, or if English is not your first or favoured language. The 'Listen' button appears at the top of every page on the Council's website. We can also provide documents in an alternative format including audio, large print, Braille, and other languages.

If you have a poor internet connection or would like help to view documents online, you can contact our Customer Service Centre where our staff will be able to help you. You might also be able to visit your local library or parish council office to see documents online, but do contact them before visiting so they can let you know how they can help.

Printed copies of documents can be sent to you on request, but we will make a charge to cover the cost of printing and postage.

Please call 01245 606606 or contact us online <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/your-council/contacting-us/contact-customer-services/> for more information on accessibility.

3 When will you consult people on Planning Policy?

We will consult you when we are:

- A) preparing a Local Plan
- B) preparing a Supplementary Planning Document
- C) helping a local community to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan
- D) working with a developer on a masterplan.

We will set out a timetable for these in an updated Local Development Scheme.

Although there are certain things we will do for each type of consultation to make sure we comply with legislation, there are other things we may do depending on the subject, timing and who we are consulting to raise awareness and give more people a chance to get involved. These are set out for the different types of consultation below.

A) Preparing a Local Plan

We adopted the Local Plan in May 2020. This followed the six stages set out below which we carried out between 2015 and 2018. The Local Plan allocates sites for development to meet Chelmsford's needs until 2036.

When we are developing our Local Plan, we also have to assess the plan's impact on the environment, economy and society. This is called the Sustainability Appraisal, which also covers habitats regulations. We update this at key stages of preparing the Local Plan, and we will consult on the updated versions at the same time as we consult on the Local Plan.

Although the Local Plan is a new document, we plan to review it every 5 years to meet legislation. The review will take some time to do as we will again follow the stages of preparation and engagement below, so we anticipate beginning the process in 2022.

Stage 1 Evidence gathering

This involves reviewing and developing a range of evidence to inform the Local Plan review including national policy

We will

- Engage with specified stakeholders and duty to co-operate bodies
- Invite comments.

We may also

- Arrange focused meetings with interest groups.

Stage 2 Preparation

This involves debate and information gathering on content of the reviewed Local Plan. This may involve one or two preparation stage consultations (referred to as ‘Regulation 18’).

We will

- Prepare and consult on a Sustainability Appraisal
- Gain Council approval of consultation documents
- Invite comments.

We may also

- Arrange presentations for local interest groups
- Hold public exhibitions.

Stage 3 Draft Local Plan Publication

This involves drafting a final version of the Local Plan taking comments, evidence and national policy into account (referred to as ‘Regulation 19’). This includes a Policies Map to show all the policies and the areas they cover.

We will

- Gain Council approval of consultation documents
- Update and consult on the Sustainability Appraisal
- Collate all comments received into a Consultation Statement
- Invite comments on soundness and legal compliance only.

We may also

- Publish feedback on the results of the Stage 2 consultation and how it has been used
- Arrange presentations for local interest groups
- Hold public exhibitions.

Stage 4 Submission

This involves sending the Local Plan, supporting documents, the evidence base, and all comments received from public consultation to the Secretary of State.

We will

- Publish all documents on our website
- Notify the specified stakeholders and duty to co-operate bodies
- Notify other people who have said they want to be notified
- Make a print copy available at our Customer Service Centre.

We may also

- Publish feedback the results of the Stage 3 consultation and how it has been used.

Stage 5 Examination

This involves a public examination by an independent Planning Inspector on the Local Plan and all the comments received on it.

We will

- Publish the details of the Examination and the matters to be discussed
- Invite people who made a comment to attend and speak at the examination
- Keep the website up to date with any new documents
- If the Inspector recommends 'main modifications' before the Local Plan can be adopted, we will consult on those too.

Stage 6 Adoption

This involves considering the recommendations in the Inspector's Report, and reporting to Full Council to gain adoption of the Local Plan.

We will

- Publish the Inspector's Report on our website and make a print copy available at the Customer Service centre
- Notify people who have made a comment that we have received the Inspector's Report
- Adopt the Local Plan at a Full Council meeting
- Publish the adopted Local Plan and its Adoption Statement, and final Sustainability Appraisal and its Adoption Statement, on our website and make a print copy available at our Customer Service Centre
- Send the Local Plan Adoption Statement to people who have made a comment, or asked to be notified
- Publish the Local Plan Adoption Statement in a local newspaper.

We may also

- Issue a media release
- Add information to social media feeds.

B) Preparing a Supplementary Planning Document

We produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) to give additional information on how some of our Local Plan policies will be used in making planning decisions. We are planning to consult on two new SPD:

- The Making Places SPD outlines measures to promote high-quality sustainable development. In it we set out development standards and design guidance
- The Planning Obligations SPD sets out our approach to seeking planning obligations which are needed to support new development, dependent on the type and scale of development.

These consultations, and any other SPD that come forwards, will follow the process set out below.

Stage 1 Evidence gathering

This involves developing a range of evidence to inform the SPD including national policy.

We will

- Prepare a scope of the issues to be addressed with the input of other Council services and Councillors.

Stage 2 SPD Preparation

This involves using the evidence and identified issues about the content of the new SPD and using it to produce a draft document for consultation.

We will

- Gain Council approval of consultation documents
- Invite comments.

We may also

- Arrange presentations for local interest groups
- Public exhibitions.

Stage 3 Adoption

This involves drafting the final version of the SPD taking comments, evidence and national policy into account.

We will

- Collate all comments received into a Consultation Statement
- Adopt the document at a public meeting of the Council or one of its committees

- Publish the adopted SPD and an Adoption Statement on our website and make a print copy available at our Customer Service Centre
- Send the Adoption Statement to people who have made a comment, or asked to be notified.

We may also

- Issue a media release
- Add information to social media feeds.

C) Community-Led Planning Consultation

Community-led planning gives rights and powers for communities to get more involved in planning for their areas. It is optional, and is led by a town or parish council, or a community organisation. We will give help at key stages.

The most commonly used right is to produce a **Neighbourhood Development Plan**. This is a planning document which sets out policies for development and use of land in a neighbourhood. It is referred to simply as a Neighbourhood Plan.

Community groups can also produce the following:

Neighbourhood Development Order

- Groups can grant permission for certain types of development without people applying to us for planning permission.

Community Right to Build Order

- Enables small scale development in neighbourhoods such as housing for local needs or community facilities.

The process for these is similar to the process for Neighbourhood Plans. Groups should contact us for more information before starting any work.

Other community-led planning initiatives might be more appropriate for your area such as a conservation area appraisal, village design statement or parish plan, or informal projects and partnerships.

All community-led plans must be in general conformity with national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Local Plan. They should be positive planning documents and support the strategic development needs of the whole City Council area, rather than trying to prevent or reduce them.

There are a number of very good online resources for more information on all the different types of community-led planning.

Locality offers a wide range of support, including guides and toolkits. It also manages Government grant funding for plans, which can allow groups to get technical support and pay for key elements of developing their plan. neighbourhoodplanning.org

The Rural Community Council for Essex offers a wide range of advice, guidance documents, and one to one support for groups. <https://www.essexrcc.org.uk/>

You can **contact us** for advice and guidance, and for further details of what we can do to help you. Planning.design@chelmsford.gov.uk

The process for developing Neighbourhood Plans is set out below, outlining the responsibilities of the community group and what we will do to help. Some of the actions are set out in the legislation and are listed below as actions that the group or we must do. There could be other things that we may do, if appropriate. A similar process will be followed where a Neighbourhood Group wants to update a made Neighbourhood Plan, depending on the scale of the changes proposed.

Stage 1 Group formation

This involves setting up the group, known as the qualifying body, to develop the plan.

- Where there is a Parish Council, they are the ‘qualifying body’, so they do not need to apply to form the group
- Where there is no Parish Council, a Neighbourhood Forum can be set up. A proposed forum should have 21 members living or working in the neighbourhood, which should include City Council Members. It must prepare a written constitution.

The group will

- Apply to us for designation, providing the forum name, written constitution, name of the area and map, contact details, and conditions statement.

We will

- Publish the forum application and supporting information on our website
- Invite comments
- Take comments into account and decide whether to designate the forum
- Publish the decision and supporting information on our website.

Stage 2 Area designation

This involves agreeing the area that the Neighbourhood Plan will cover.

- Where there is a Parish Council, the area will usually follow the Parish boundary. Parish Councils should consult with neighbouring Councils before deciding on the area. The area can be part of a Parish or more than one Parish
- Where there is no Parish Council, a Neighbourhood Forum will normally decide the area before applying to designate the forum group. It might cover an area with similar characteristics or a single ward or multiple wards of the City area.

The group will

- Send us a statement of why the area is appropriate, that they are a relevant body, the name of the area, and a map.

We will

- For an area following a single parish boundary – decide the application under delegated powers
- For all other areas – publicise the application on our website and invite comments
- Take comments into account and decide whether to designate the forum
- Publish the decision and supporting information on our website.

We may also

- Issue a media release
- Add information to social media feeds.

Stage 3 Plan development

This involves the group/forum setting up a steering group, agreeing things like a timeline and budget, reviewing existing evidence, engaging with the community, and drafting a plan.

The group will

- Agree a work programme which will depend on the size of the community and the scope of the plan
- Engage with local people, businesses, and other interested organisations on an ongoing basis during the plan development. The plan should be based on evidence which includes the community's priorities and ideas.

We will

Offer support including the following:

- Provide a central point of communication
- Assess questionnaires to ensure all relevant issues are included
- Share data and existing evidence base documents
- Share information on key contacts and stakeholders
- Provide technical mapping support
- Advise on compliance with national and local planning policy
- Provide links to group/forum information on our website.

We cannot

- Fund any additional evidence studies needed
- Prepare or fund any consultation documents or activities, although we can offer advice
- Prepare or submit bids for grant funding.

Stage 4 **Draft Plan**

This involves the group finalising its draft plan and consulting with the local community and specified stakeholders (referred to as 'Regulation 14').

The group will

- Publicise the draft plan
- Invite comments
- Consult specified stakeholders
- Send us a copy of the draft plan
- Review the comments and make any updates to the draft plan.

We will

- Make comments on the draft plan as a consultee
- Add information about the consultation to our website.

Stage 5 **Submission Plan**

This involves the group updating its final plan taking comments, evidence and national policy into account. It then submits the plan to us to carry out formal consultation (referred to as 'Regulation 16').

The group will

Submit to us:

- The draft plan and a map of the area it covers
- A consultation statement explaining how people have been consulted, a summary of the comments received, and how comments have been used
- A statement of how the plan meets the legislation requirements.

We will

- Publish all submitted documents on our website
- Notify any specified stakeholders who made previous comments that the plan has been submitted
- Invite comments.

Stage 6 **Examination**

This involves an independent examiner carrying out an examination of the plan. This will make sure that the proper legal process has been followed and that the plan meets prescribed basic conditions. This is usually, but not always, done in writing rather than a formal hearing.

We will

- Appoint an independent examiner
- Send all the submission documents and comments received to the examiner
- When the examiner sends their report, decide how to action any recommendations and what modifications should be made to the plan
- Publicise the decision and reasons for it, along with the examiner's report.

Stage 7 Referendum and adoption

This involves holding a public referendum in the Neighbourhood Area covered by the plan. If more than 50% vote yes, we will adopt the plan. This is known as a 'made' plan.

We will

- Organise, manage and finance the referendum
- Publicise the results of the referendum
- If a yes vote, adopt the plan as part of the Local Plan
- Publicise the adoption of the plan.

We may also

- Issue a media release
- Add information to social media feeds.

D) Masterplans Consultation

Masterplans are high level documents that set out what we expect from new development. They are a key stage between us adopting our Local Plan and planning applications being submitted by developers. They are separate from the planning application process, which follows afterwards with more detail on things like architecture, detailed landscape, and building materials.

We want to make this a meaningful process for residents and community groups to engage with the process. We use Masterplans to help shape excellent places to live, work and enjoy. They help us to make sure developments deliver what the area needs, while giving developers some flexibility.

What are Masterplans?

The Local Plan allocates the major growth sites and sets out policies for what must be provided on the site. Masterplans are prepared by site developers for the major growth sites allocated in the Local Plan. They may also be completed for other long-term projects proposing a number of linked developments for different time scales.

We work with the developers to make sure the Masterplans meet the policy we have set and to allow local communities to get involved.

Stage 3

Formal approval

This involves feeding back on the results of the consultation, approval of the final Masterplan and gaining agreement for it to be used when planning applications are considered.

We will

- Decide whether the changes need a second consultation – usually only one consultation will be needed, but if significant changes are made following the first consultation, we may repeat Stage 2 to allow people to make further comments
- Write a consultation report including how many responses we received, the topics and issues raised, and how the comments have been used to update the Masterplan
- Report the consultation report and updated Masterplan to a Council meeting
- Approve the Masterplan at a Council meeting as approved guidance.

4 Get Involved with Development Management

We consult with the community and key stakeholders at the following different stages of development

- A) Pre-application
- B) Planning applications
- C) Planning Appeals.

Whilst there are certain things we must do to make sure we comply with legislation, these are the minimum requirements for publicising and consulting the community and stakeholders on planning applications. There are additional things we may do depending on the subject, timing and who we are consulting to raise awareness and give more people a chance to get involved. The legislation does change from time to time, so if the legislation changes, we will follow what it says. This might be different from what is set out for the different stages of development below, but we will publicise any changes on our website.

A) Pre-application consultation

This involves consultation which may be carried out before a planning application is made. This is usually carried out by the developers themselves for larger scale or potentially contentious development. It provides a good opportunity for applicants to find out how local residents feel about planning proposals, and allows people to make suggestions which the developer can include in their planning application. This helps to make sure that planning applications are high quality.

We will

- Encourage developers to carry out pre-application consultation
- Ask them to make sure that local people, the town or parish council, and other affected organisations know about the proposals and can make their comments. They may do this through exhibitions, focused workshops and websites
- Advise developers on ways of consulting and who to consult
- After the consultation, we ask developers to include details of how they have consulted and how comments have been used, alongside their planning application. This means that we can see what issues have been raised and how they have been dealt with, before making a decision on the planning application.

B) Planning application consultation

This involves publishing planning applications with their supporting documents, inviting comments within set timeframes, and deciding planning applications taking national and local policy and all the comments received into account.

We will

- Publish details of all planning applications on our planning portal Public Access, reached via our website
- Display a site notice at or near to the application site with details of the application, where you can view it, and the date you should make your comments by
- Publish your comments alongside the application details on our Public Access, or a summary if they are hand-written
- Follow any other legislation currently in force.

You can

- View documents and sign up to be notified about planning applications on the self-service system on Public Access, where you can also:
 - Track applications and be notified when they are being progressed
 - Search a weekly list, or by an address, or by a reference number
 - Choose which applications you want to be notified about
 - View supporting plans and documents
 - See other related plans such as previous applications and property history
 - Submit comments electronically using an efficient and easy to use system
 - Read the officer's report and decision notice
 - See if any planning appeals have been made and read decisions on them
 - Find enforcement cases
 - If you are using a phone or tablet you can make comments via our online form.

You should

- Make sure you send us your comments by the closing date
- Provide your name and address – otherwise we cannot consider your comments
- Not make inappropriate comments including any that are racist, inflammatory or derogatory
- Limit your comments to material planning matters. These include:
 - the size and scale of the proposal
 - potential loss of light
 - the design and appearance of the proposal
 - potential loss of privacy or increased overlooking
 - the impact on traffic and parking
 - potential for additional noise and disturbance
 - the impact on trees, landscape or existing buildings.

Planning matters do not include:

- property value
- the loss of a view
- land ownership disputes or covenants
- preference for an alternative development
- competition for existing business
- the personal circumstance of the applicant.

How we make decisions

Most decisions on planning applications – about 97% - are made by planning officers under delegated powers. We have targets for the time taken to make planning decisions. At the moment these are 13 weeks for major applications, 16 weeks where a major application needs an Environmental Impact Assessment, and 8 weeks for all others. Sometimes the time can be extended if necessary. If the legislation changes, we will follow what it says.

For large complex applications, we may agree a longer timetable with the applicant to make sure everything can be fully considered. This is called a planning performance agreement, which will include how the community will be consulted on the proposal.

The remaining 3% of planning applications are decided by the Planning Committee. These are usually some of the more significant or controversial planning applications and those that cannot be determined by officers under delegated powers.

We present a written report and an officer recommendation, taking account of all the comments received, to Planning Committee. At the meeting, Councillors discuss and decide on the application. You can attend a Planning Committee to give your views on a planning application or ask questions during time that is set aside at the beginning of the meeting. You can find out more about this on our website.

We will

- Publish the decision on the planning application on our website
- Publish the officer report and decision notice
- Include any conditions the planning permission must comply with
- Include the reasons for an application which is refused planning permission.

C) Planning appeal consultation

An applicant can appeal if:

- we have refused planning permission
- we have included conditions that they feel are not acceptable
- if we have not decided the application within the time limits.

If you have made comments to a planning application, we will notify you if an appeal is made.

A planning inspector will decide if the appeal can be allowed or dismissed. The type of hearing depends on the application. This may be carried out in writing, or at an informal hearing, or at a public inquiry.

For appeals on applications made by householders, you are not able to make any further comments and your original comments will be taken into consideration. For other appeals you can submit more written comments.

For appeals decided by an informal hearing or a public inquiry, you can also ask to appear at the hearing or inquiry to make your comments in person.

The Inspector will decide if our planning decision was correct, and the decision is binding on the Council. The Inspector will send us a decision notice which we will publish on our website.

Other engagement

We sometimes arrange forum meetings with stakeholders to let them know about new initiatives and updates on the way we engage and consult on planning policy, planning applications, appeals and enforcement. These groups usually include Parish Councils, planning agents and major developers, and we may invite other stakeholders depending on the topic.

Appendix 1

Specific consultation bodies:

In accordance with government regulations the following specific consultation bodies must be consulted where the Council considers that they may have an interest in the subject of the planning document:

- The Coal Authority
- The Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Marine Management Organisation
- Natural England
- Network Rail
- Highways England
- A relevant authority any part of whose area is in or adjoins the local planning authority's area:
 - Adjoining local planning authorities – Braintree District Council, Maldon District Council, Rochford District Council, Basildon Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Epping Forest District Council and Uttlesford District Council
 - Essex County Council
 - Parish and Town Councils within and adjoining Chelmsford City Council's area
 - Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
- Electronic communications companies who own or control apparatus situated in Chelmsford City Council
- Relevant utility and infrastructure providers (including transport network, water, sewerage, energy [electricity and gas] and telecom)
- Anglian Water
- Essex and Suffolk Water
- NHS Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group
- Homes England

Duty to Co-operate bodies

The Localism Act 2011 introduced a Duty to Co-operate, which is designed to ensure that all organisations involved in planning work together on issues that are of a bigger than local significance.

The authorities and agencies that the City Council will co-operate with is specified in Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012. The following bodies are designed as Duty to Co-operate stakeholders (this is not an exhaustive list):

- The Environment Agency
- Historic England
- Natural England

- The Mayor of London
- The Civil Aviation Authority
- Homes England
- Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group
- The Office of Rail Regulation
- Transport for London
- Integrated Transport Authorities
- Highways England and Essex County Council as the local Highway Authority
- The Marine Management Organisation
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership SELEP

General consultation bodies

We also consult with other organisations that have an interest in our policies and who can help us with information and ideas.

- Neighbouring and nearby Local Planning Authorities
 - Essex County Council
 - Within the Housing Market Area (HMA) – Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council
 - Other adjoining authorities – Maldon District Council, Rochford District Council, Basildon Council, Brentwood Borough Council, Epping Forest District Council and Uttlesford District Council
 - Non-adjoining authorities – Castle Point District Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Harlow District Council and East Herts District Council
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)
- Essex Police, Essex Fire and Rescue
- Network Rail
- Sport England
- Essex Bridleways Association
- Relevant educational bodies (such as Writtle University College and Anglia Ruskin University)
- Voluntary bodies some of all of whose activities benefit any part of the administrative areas (such as YMCA)
- Bodies which represent the interest of different racial, ethnic or national groups within the administrative area (such as Essex Racial Equality Council)
- Bodies which represent the interests of the different religious groups within the administrative area
- Bodies which represent the interests of disabled persons within the administrative area
- Bodies which represent the interests of person carrying on business within the administrative area (such as Chelmsford Business Forum)
- Bodies which represent the interest of environmental groups within the administrative area (such as Essex Wildlife Trust in lieu of a Local Nature Partnership)



This publication is available in alternative formats including large print, audio and other languages.

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