

What is happening?

Chelmsford City Council has published its Regulation 18 Issues and Options consultation on the Review of its adopted Local Plan.

The Council has published the following documents for public consultation for ten weeks from **10am on Thursday 11 August 2022 until 4pm on Thursday 20 October 2022**.

- Review of Chelmsford Local Plan Issues and Options
- Review of the Chelmsford Local Plan Issues and Options Integrated Impact Assessment.

What is the Chelmsford Local Plan?

The Council's Local Plan was adopted in 2020 and it guides growth and development across Chelmsford City Council's area to 2036. It sets out how much new development is needed and identifies land for housing, schools, shops and jobs as well as areas for protection, such as open space and sites important for wildlife. The adopted Local Plan also includes policies to help determine planning applications ranging from household extensions to major new employment developments.

Why do we have to review the adopted Local Plan?

The Government requires all councils to review their Local Plan every five years. This will ensure that it remains up to date and continues to meet changing needs of our current and future residents.

As we adopted the Local Plan in May 2020, we must review it by May 2025 and that needs to start now, in order to ensure we properly involve the community.

The Government is clear that housing growth is fundamental to revitalising the economy and the thrust of national planning guidance (NPPF) is to 'boost significantly the supply of housing'. The need for housing is not just a national issue, but a local one too. Without an up-to-date Local Plan, the Council could have very little influence over the location of new development and the provision of infrastructure. Sites could be promoted for development in locations that the Council and its communities want to protect, and which are not considered sustainable. Not having an up-to-date Local Plan would create uncertainty and make it harder to secure appropriate sites for new infrastructure such as schools and health facilities.

What Stage is the Local Plan at?

This consultation is the first stage towards updating the adopted Local Plan and provides a starting point for engagement with our communities. The main purpose of the consultation is to ensure that we cover the right issues and that all suitable options for accommodating change are considered. The main areas we are consulting on are:

- Updated draft Strategic Priorities
- New draft Vision
- The approach to calculating future development requirements, including homes and jobs
- Spatial Strategy Approaches for accommodating additional future growth to 2041
- The approach to reviewing our planning policies.

We think that many parts of the adopted Local Plan and its policies are still up to date and generally performing well, so may require no or only partial changes. Other parts, however, will need updating alongside additional new policies that are required to reflect the latest national planning policy requirements, the Council's new ambitions and aspirations and to meet new development growth to 2041.

As such, the review process is expected to result in changes to the adopted Local Plan – but we are not working on a completely new plan from scratch. It is also not a reopening of any debates about already allocated sites.

The consultation document sets out five approaches for accommodating the additional development growth needed. These take varying approaches, and it is likely that the eventual preferred approach might not be one of the five listed, but a combination of the most sustainable and deliverable elements.

Consultation on this document is the start of the conversation towards the review of the Local Plan. We are inviting residents, businesses, developers and other interested parties to share their views and get involved with helping to shape the review of the adopted Local Plan. This is just the very first stage and there will be further consultation and engagement on the later stages of the preparation of the review plan.

What is the Integrated Impact Assessment?

The adopted Local Plan was developed alongside a comprehensive Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) process. For this review process, the Council is including other aspects of sustainable development in an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), which covers the following:

- Sustainability Appraisal
- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Habitats Regulations Assessment
- Health Impact Assessment
- Equality Impact Assessment.

The IIA assesses the issues and options against a range of social, environmental and economic indicators and helps to identify all the likely significant effects. The IIA advises on ways in which any adverse effects could be avoided, reduced or mitigated or how any positive effects could be maximised. This helps to ensure that the emerging policies, plans and allocations in the Local Plan are promoting sustainable development.

Where to view and comment on the documents?

View and comment online

We encourage people to view and comment online, using our specially designed Consultation Portal. This helps us to record comments accurately and process them quickly. Go to www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planningpolicyconsult.

For tips on how to register, or what to do if people are registered but have forgotten their login details, read our User Guide to find out more:

www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-portal-guide

View in person

Paper copies can be viewed at the City Council Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1JE Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm (Please note we are closed on bank holidays).

Comment via email

Comments may be submitted by email: planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk

Paper comments

You can submit your comments by post or deliver them in person in the following ways:

Post: Spatial Planning Services, Chelmsford City Council, Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1JE

By hand: Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm - Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1JE (outside of these hours you can use the post box outside the Customer Service Centre).

If you do not have access to a computer, you can request paper copies. A charge will be made to cover printing and postage costs.

If you have difficulties making representations by e-mail or post due to a disability, please call us (01245) 606330.

Consultation documents can be made available in alternative format such as Braille, large print, audio tape and other languages. Please contact the Planning and Housing Policy Team on (01245) 606330.

Please note that any representations must be received by the Council no later than 4pm on Thursday 20 October 2022.

How much are the documents to purchase?

It is reasonable for the Council to charge for paper copies although this cost only covers their printing and postage.

Costs are as follows:

Issues and Options Consultation Document £6.35 + P&P

Issues and Options Integrated Impact Assessment £15 + P&P

Where and when are the Local Plan exhibitions?

We will be hosting an online virtual exhibition as well as having an in-person exhibition at the Council Offices. Here you can view our exhibition boards which contain a summary of the consultation (**please note both forms of exhibition will have the same information available**).

Virtual exhibition: Available to view via www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-exhibition

In-person exhibition: Chelmsford City Council Chamber, accessed via Customer Service Centre, Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1JE:

- Friday 7th October 2022, 11am to 2pm
- Saturday 8th October 2022, 10am to 1pm

The in-person public exhibitions will be staffed and provide an opportunity to meet a planning officer face-to-face.

What status does the Issues and Options Local Plan have?

This is a consultation document and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to their stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies, and their degree of consistency with policies in the NPPF.

As this is the first stage of the Review of the Local Plan limited weight in the determination of planning applications will be given to this consultation document as this is still at an early stage of the Plan making process.

What will happen to the current Local Plan?

The current adopted Local Plan will remain in place until such time as the review of it is complete. At this point the review Plan will replace the current adopted Local Plan.

How many new homes and jobs are planned?

The adopted Local Plan has allocated sites for development which are now coming forward, with Masterplans being approved and planning applications decided or in progress.

In reviewing the Local Plan, we need to work out how many more houses and jobs we need to plan for until 2041. Using a formula set by the Government, called the standard method, we can work out a minimum figure for the number of houses needed. Then we add a buffer to make sure we can be flexible if some sites do not come forward, to meet the housing needs of specific groups, and to significantly boost the supply of different sizes and types of homes in the Council's area.

We estimate this to be an additional 7,966 homes by 2041.

The Local Plan will also need to meet future employment needs, and it may mean allocating some additional sites for employment development. We are carrying out a study of employment needs to make sure we can update our policies to support the economy and provide sites for new jobs.

Where are you going to build the new homes?

There are several ways that growth can be accommodated, and therefore where sites are allocated. We consider an area's population, proximity to facilities, wellbeing of residents, land availability, what you tell us during the consultation, and lots of evidence on important matters.

We are looking at different approaches to see how the growth we need can be accommodated. The five approaches in the Issues and Options document (referenced A

to E) set out the same amount of growth but use different types of location. We do not identify any preferred options or specific development sites. We have shown an indicative number of homes for each location, which will be refined and informed by the results of the consultation and the evidence.

None of these include areas in the Green Belt, which is not being considered for development allocations.

The feedback we receive during the consultation will be key to deciding which approach to follow, which might not be one of the five listed, but a combination of the most sustainable and deliverable elements.

The next stage of the Local Plan (the Preferred Options) will identify preferred locations and site boundaries for the growth needed.

How can I bring land forward for development?

If you have land that you feel would be suitable for housing or employment development, you can promote this to us through our Call for Sites facility. Using this facility, you can submit a new site that has not previously been promoted through a Call for Sites, or you can submit an amendment to a site that has already been considered in previous Call for Sites.

Sites that have been submitted to us through this facility will be assessed through our Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and published on our website following the close of the Issues and Options Consultation. The SHELAA is designed to assess the suitability, availability, and achievability of development. The outcomes of the assessment will serve as an evidence base for the Council to consider along with other evidence when determining land to be allocated.

More information on the SHELAA and links to the Call for Sites facility can be found on our website at: <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy-and-local-plan/call-for-sites-shelaa-and-parish-maps/> Here you will also find details of the previous SHELAA which can be used to check if your site has previously been promoted to us.

What are the Topic Papers?

To assist in explaining what has led to the position on different subject areas set out in the Issues and Options consultation document we have produced 'Topic Papers' to explain the thought process on a number of key topics. These are available to view on our website via: www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review and cover the following subject areas:

- Climate Change
- Employment
- Health and Wellbeing
- Historic Environment
- Housing Needs
- Infrastructure
- Transport

What is the evidence base?

National policy requires the Council to ensure that its Plan is based on appropriate up-to-date evidence about economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of Chelmsford. The evidence base comprises studies and working with key stakeholders and groups across the City. Documents completed to support this Issues and Options Consultation are:

- Integrated Impact Assessment
- Sustainable Accessibility Mapping and Appraisal of Spatial Approaches

These evidence base documents are available online via www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review. Further evidence will be reviewed and updated as we progress through the next stages of the Review of the Local Plan.

There is also evidence base documents which were used to support the adopted Local Plan. Many of these are still relevant or will be updated during the course of the review of the Local Plan. Although they do not form part of this consultation these evidence base documents are available to view at: <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy-and-local-plan/adopted-local-plan/evidence-base/>

What happens after the consultation?

The Council will acknowledge receipt of comments and fully consider them, although the Council will not enter into individual correspondence. All duly-made comments will be published on the Council's Consultation Portal in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. Comments will be published with the respondent's name and will be available for public viewing. No other personal details will be made public.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires that the Council should avoid any form of discrimination and also foster good relations between different ethnic groups. Comments which are deemed to be discriminatory will be inadmissible and will not be accepted.

All comments will be considered and used to help us produce the next stage consultation document, the preferred options version of the review of the Local Plan and its updated Integrated Impact Assessment. We plan to consult on this in the first quarter of 2023.

What the Review means for Neighbourhood Planning

Town and parish councils, or other organisations, can take the lead in creating neighbourhood development plans, community plans and orders for planning in their area. Neighbourhood development plans, and other community plans or orders can become part of the Local Plan, with equal legal status.

Neighbourhood Plans have been adopted for South Woodham Ferrers, and Writtle. This means that they form part of the adopted Local Plan. They will be checked when the reviewed Local Plan is adopted to make sure they are still compatible.

Other Neighbourhood Plans are being developed for Boreham, Broomfield, Danbury, East Hanningfield, Little Baddow, and Sandon. Work will continue on these, and they will need to reflect the current stage of the review of the Local Plan as they progress.

What has new development brought to Chelmsford?

The Local Plan affects the way we live, work and enjoy Chelmsford in the next 20 years and beyond. The priorities of the adopted Local Plan, delivery of allocated sites and developer contributions are in combination bringing new development, improvements and infrastructure to Chelmsford, including:

- Housing development including affordable housing and specialist residential accommodation
- Commercial development including jobs and employment floorspace
- Community facilities including schools, childcare nurseries, shops and open space
- Transport infrastructure including roads, cycleways, pedestrian routes, public realm improvements, with a new rail station to be built at North East Chelmsford and the Chelmsford North East Bypass
- Access road and bridge into Chelmer Waterside
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions – helping to deliver projects such as the new Riverside Leisure Centre, public realm and parks improvements, wayfinding signs around the city centre to provide information for visitors, ease route legibility, the provision of cycling infrastructure.

When will the Chelmsford North East Bypass open?

The scheme will connect to the new Beaulieu Park development in the south and Deres Bridge and Great Leighs in the north, providing a vital link between the A120 and the A12.

The new 4.6km single carriageway road will be constructed between the current Beaulieu Park development and a new roundabout on the existing A131 at Chatham Green, while a 1.2km stretch of the existing A131 between Chatham Green and Deres Bridge will also be widened to a dual carriageway as part of the scheme.

The new route will bypass residential areas and help relieve congestion in Chelmsford, as well as providing a strategic link between the city, Braintree, London Stansted Airport and the wider east and southeast of England, including South Essex and the planned new Lower Thames Crossing.

Planning permission was granted for the bypass in March 2022. Construction of the bypass, which also includes walking, cycling, horse riding and bus improvements, is currently scheduled to begin early next year, with the new road expected to open in 2024/25.

For more information about the scheme and to sign up for the project newsletter, please visit: www.essexhighways.org/chelmsford-north-east-bypass

When will the new Station open?

The new Station will ease congestion in the city centre, which has the busiest two-platform railway station outside of London. The project will also provide sustainable travel choices for cyclists and pedestrians, with links to existing and new communities. It will provide:

- Three platforms with a central loop line and new tracks. This will enable stopping services to call at the station, while allowing fast trains to pass through unimpeded
- Accessible toilets, change facilities, waiting areas and space for retail and catering

- 500 spaces for cycle parking and storage
- A bus interchange and dedicated taxi bays
- Parking for more than 700 cars, including designated Blue Badge bays and motorcycle space

With both the funding and detailed planning now in place, the station will now move through the final stages of its technical design. Its anticipated start date on site is early spring 2023 and under the current programme, the station is scheduled to be completed in December 2025.

Questions and Answers, from Webinar on 11 October 2022

Have you reassessed the need for housing in the light of Covid?

We have a 'standard method' that the Government requires us to use to determine how many new houses are needed. In Chelmsford we have just commissioned consultants to have a look at housing need, and give us some insight into the impact of COVID in relation to the housing market and market trends. People still need to be housed and households are still being formed, so we will look at the statistics to see if COVID has had any impact in relation to some of those household formation rates.

Is the review concerned more with allocating another 1600 houses a year between 2037 and 2041 than reviewing the current plan?

At the moment the requirement is around about 1,000 homes per year. We add a supply buffer to compensate for the fact that it can be difficult to meet that requirement. This can be due to a number of factors, including sites not coming forward in the plan cycle. Therefore, we allocate slightly more sites than we have the requirement for to ensure we can meet our housing need.

In effect we're not just adding five years onto the plan horizon, but we are looking at the whole plan period, meaning we have five more years of growth to account for, in addition to applying that new housing requirement over the whole plan period from a base year of 2022.

What is the next step of the review process?

We're at the very first stage at the moment, the Issues and Options. We're asking for your views on the issues that are facing Chelmsford in terms of planning over the next 15 or so years. And we're suggesting, through the consultation, a number of approaches to deal with some of the big issues going forward.

Once the consultation finishes, we'll review all the comments that we receive from members of the public, from other stakeholders, and from neighbouring planning authorities, and summarise the main issues into a feedback report which will be published on the Council's website.

We'll then use all those comments, alongside the technical evidence base studies, to prepare the draft Local Plan. That will be published for a further round of public consultation, in 2023. After that, we review the comments again and we refine the draft Plan before publishing it for a further round of consultation, scheduled for 2024. All comments received to that consultation and the final draft Plan are sent to an independent planning inspector who will be appointed to examine the document in public.

Following that we hope to adopt the review Plan by about 2025. That's important because the Government sets a target for local authorities to review their plans every five years and update them, so we're planning to meet that deadline.

Will the 2021 Census feed into the review?

We'll take into account the latest data in terms of level of population and population forecasts, and also the demographic breakdown of our community and how that's forecast to change, to make sure that the review Plan is as up to date and robust as possible.

That will feed into, in particular, our work to establish the local housing need alongside other evidence to help to inform the level of proposed housing growth that that we need to plan for and the best locations for that.

The central Government Levelling Up agenda surely needs more development in the more northern areas of England rather than SE / E Anglia?

Levelling up will take quite a long time because of the need to regenerate some areas to provide employment opportunities where there hasn't been the demand for housing, so people don't need to move to areas where there is more employment. The south-east and London are a world centre for commerce, finance and service industries, and attract people to live and work. This means that in the south-east and the East Anglia the population is rising significantly higher than in other areas, so we need to plan for that.

The definition of 'affordable housing' in the annexe to NPPR includes affordable to rent and affordable to buy. In relation to buying there is a reference to 'local'. How is 'local' defined in relation to Chelmsford? Local people on local salaries are priced out and can't buy locally, therefore losing out on the support of their local family network. How are the terms local, and local incomes, defined for the above?

Affordable housing is the ratio between local house prices and residents' incomes. The local element is defined by looking at the ratio in a local area based on the relationship between how much people earn and the average house price, and in particular, the cost of social rented affordable housing. Local, to us, means everyone in Chelmsford's administrative area, and the need for affordable housing is anyone whose need arises in that area.

Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value? Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

First Homes are the main source of discounted market sales. We have published an advice note - see section 4 for local eligibility criteria

<https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/media/kh4nwbvr/first-homes-planning-advice-note.pdf>

This is where housing is sold at a discount of at least 20% below market value and eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices, but provision is made to ensure housing remains at discount for future eligible households. Through other policies, we can also look at providing affordable housing at a more localised level, for example at a parish level if there is a specific need.

How do the allocated sites that are not up for debate square with reviewing the whole Plan?

We review whether allocated sites are still deliverable. We are not aware that any of the strategic sites in the adopted Local Plan are not deliverable as many have had masterplans approved and planning applications being submitted.

How do you CCC, promote active travel when it's ECC that contracts the bus services? (services have been reduced lately!)

New developments, particularly strategic housing sites, will provide opportunities for new bus services to be provided. We promote active travel through the masterplanning of sites, ensuring we have movement networks which prioritise walking, cycling and sustainable transport. Legal agreements secure new bus routes and travel planning measures.

In the whole process, housing appears to be done in isolation with no thought for the impact on existing residents; and on the totality of developments.

We go through a lot of consultation, we listen, and we do act on the consultation responses that come back to us. We will go through three stages of consultation and demonstrate that we've fully engaged our local community. It would be wrong to say that we're always going to please everyone as that is very unlikely and there are always decisions that need to be made which won't necessarily please everyone.

The main document may well be about 100 pages, but there are references to policy documents, and studies and all that needs to be read, digested and understood also.

We've provided links to supporting documents, and we do appreciate for people that are interested in everything there is potentially quite a lot to read, but people can focus on certain topics of interest.

The consultation period has extended for 10 weeks, rather than the 6 weeks required by legislation, allowing people the time to digest and read the information that's available.

The planning application portal is not fit for purpose, there are issues with it as I believe CCC are aware?

There are two 'portals' - one deals with planning applications, and the other has been set up specifically for planning policy and local plan consultations.

The planning policy consultation portal can be found at www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planningpolicyconsult

It does require you to register to be able to take part, but it enables you to make your comments to specific questions that are of interest to you.

We prefer receiving comments in an electronic form, so if you have difficulty using the consultation portal, you can e-mail us instead: planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk

Planning Policy Team, October 2022

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