Chelmsford Local Plan Review

Client Consultation PID Number: 1348892
Client Organisation: Hallam Land

Matter 4: Infrastructure and Transport

Issue 1 – Whether the planned infrastructure aligns with the planned housing and economic growth

Question 4.2: There is currently no confirmed delivery timescale for sections 1b and 2 of the Chelmsford North East Bypass. Are there any consequences arising from this for the delivery of housing?

Introduction

1. Hallam Land's interest in the Local Plan Examination is that it is in a development partnership, promoting land for residential-led development to the north of Wheelers Hill ("**the Site**"), in a sustainable location to the east of the A131 and adjacent to the north of the current extent of Chelmsford Garden Community (also known as North East Chelmsford).

2. Stage 2 of the Chelmsford Garden Community, on land to the south of the Site, is allocated in the current Local Plan (adopted May 2020) – Strategic Growth Site (SGS) Policy 6 for 3,000 homes, as well as the supporting text identifying additional capacity for a further 2,500 homes post its 2036 plan period (some 5,500 homes in total).

3. The 'Local Plan: Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) Document' and the 'Focussed Consultation Additional Sites (Regulation 19) Document' ("**the draft Local Plan**") now propose, under Strategic Policy S7 (the Spatial Strategy) and SGS Policy 6 (Chelmsford Garden Community), around 5,579 new homes in the period to 2041, effectively carrying forward the allocation of the current Local Plan.

4. Hallam Land is supportive of the draft allocation for Chelmsford Garden Community but, for reasons of soundness, modifications to the draft Local Plan are required: Strategic Policy S7 should identify the Site for the further expansion of Chelmsford Garden Community, as a future location of sustainable growth beyond the current proposed plan period of 2041, to provide a longer term positive vision for growth and greater certainty for infrastructure planning.

5. Recognition by the draft Local Plan of the merits of residential development on the Site, north of Wheelers Hill, in itself would assist in securing future grant funding to finance the delivery of Phase 1B and Phase 2 of the Chelmsford North East Bypass ("**the CNEB**"). It would also provide a significant future source of developer contributions that would further increase future funding prospects.

6. In turn, this would ensure the effectiveness of Strategic Policy S9 (Infrastructure Requirements) and Strategic Policy 10 (Securing Infrastructure and Impact Mitigation).

Chelmsford Garden Community

7. Development at Chelmsford Garden Community is successfully being delivered:

- first phases of development at Beaulieu (3,600 homes) and Channels (750 homes) are being built and occupied, including a new railway station;
- the Council granted planning permission in January 2026 (application reference 23/00114/FUL) for the Northern Radial Distributor Road ("**the NRDR**"), which connects from west to east Wheelers Hill / A131 roundabout and Phase 1A of the CNEB as under construction, as critical infrastructure for the Garden Community. It will relieve traffic from Wheelers Hill and facilitate the southern access to the Site;
- the Council's Planning Committee has resolved to approve planning applications for the next stage of residential-led development and infrastructure:
    i. 1,500 homes, employment and associated infrastructure (application reference 22/01950/OUT – Ptarmigan) on land immediately to the south of Wheelers Hill and the Site (Planning Committee meeting on 6 October 2026, following previous positive consideration on 15 December 2025);
    ii. 1,250 homes and associated infrastructure (application reference 23/00124/OUT – Halley Developments), again on land immediately to the south of Wheelers Hill and the Site (Planning Committee meeting on 6 October 2026, following previous positive consideration on 15 December 2025); and
    iii. 3,500 homes and employment floorspace, education facilities and infrastructure (application reference 23/01751/OUT – Countryside L&Q) on land to the south east of Wheelers Hill and the Site (Planning Committee meeting on 30 June 2026).

8. This planning position:

- demonstrates the deliverability of development at Chelmsford Garden Community, where new homes and significant infrastructure are coming forwards, and confidence of the development industry in achieving strategic growth in this location;
- provides for a new northern settlement edge of Chelmsford's urban area, contiguous to the south of Wheelers Hill and the Site. Spatially, development on the Site (controlled by Hallam Land) is clearly the next logical step in how the Chelmsford Garden Community should continue to grow to the north, whether within the period of the current draft Local Plan or beyond; and
- highlights how access to the Site will be achieved, where most accessible from the A131 and the now approved NRDR that connects to Phase 1A of the CNEB. The NRDR will support significant further residential growth on the Site to the north as well that approved to the south.

9. Overall, construction works, occupation and recently approved planning applications are evidence of the continuing success of sustainable growth at Chelmsford Garden Community.

Delivery of the Chelmsford North East Bypass

Phase 1A

10. Strategic housing growth in the draft Local Plan is reliant on delivery of Phase 1A of the CNEB – a link between Beaulieu Parkway relief road and the NRDR.

11. Phase 1A of the CNEB is well advanced – funding has been secured through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and developer contributions, work has commenced and the road is anticipated to be open to all traffic following completion of works to improve Junction 19 of the A12 by October 2028[1].

12. The NRDR, which will provide connections at the northern end of the CNEB Phase 1A, has planning permission and site preparation works are taking place ahead of commencement of that development.

[1] Paragraph 7.321, Planning Committee Report – Application 23/01751/OUT

Phase 1B and Phase 2

13. Phase 1B of the CNEB is the continuation north of Phase 1A, from the eastern end of the NRDR to connect to the A131 at Chatham Green. Phase 2 of the CNEB is the dualling of the A131 from Chatham Green to the current extent of the dual carriageway beyond Deres Bridge roundabout south of Great Leighs.

14. Technical transport work carried out in relation to the draft Local Plan does not indicate that CNEB Phase 1B or Phase 2 are required to support the *current* level of growth planned for up to 2041: the 'Transport Impact Appraisal of the Local Plan Review Pre—Submission' (July 2025) [**T0006-A**] includes only Phase 1A of the CNEB in its modelling assumptions.

15. Representations from Essex County Council, as the local highway authority, and National Highways received at Regulation 19 stage do not conflict with this position. Statements of common ground progressed between the Council and both these parties do not raise issues with the phasing of the CNEB.

Further Growth of Chelmsford Garden Community

16. It is evident that the strategic policies of the draft Local Plan, being examined under the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) (against transitional measures at Annex 1 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) and Annex A of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026)), do not meet the Council's full local housing need calculated using the Government's standard method.

17. It is also evident that the strategic policies of the draft Local Plan (if to be adopted in Q3/Q4 2027, against a reasonable timetable) do not look ahead over a minimum 15 year period, contrary to Framework 2023 paragraph 22.

18. Against these matters alone, significant future housing growth across the Council's administrative area will be needed.

19. Very significant too is that paragraph 22 of the Framework (2023) requires, where larger scale development of urban extensions or new settlements is planned for, that strategic policies be set within a vision that looks further ahead to **at least 30 years** from adoption.

20. The draft Local Plan does not take such a longer term visionary approach: it is narrower in its focus, planning only for a period shorter than the minimum required and for a level of growth significantly less than needed.

21. Currently, the draft Local Plan does not take the opportunity, contrary to national policy, to provide a longer term, effective and positive vision for the Chelmsford Garden Community, which should look to build upon its continuing success of delivery beyond the current proposed plan period. To address this, the draft Local Plan should provide a vision that looks across a period of at least 30 years and present how land north of Wheelers Hill is able to accommodate sustainable future growth.

Supporting Future Infrastructure

22. Consistent with Framework 2023 paragraph 110, the draft Local Plan identifies and protects the route of Phase 1B of the CNEB and, in doing so, recognises it to be critical infrastructure in realising future large scale development.

23. The draft Local Plan should go further by positively identifying the Site and land to the north of Wheelers Hill as a broad location for growth beyond 2041. This would establish a clearer long-term vision for Chelmsford Garden Community, consistent with paragraph 22 of the Framework, and help coordinate future development with infrastructure provision. Identifying this growth opportunity would strengthen the case for future funding and provide a potential source of developer contributions towards delivery of the full CNEB.

24. The Local Plan Review Transport Topic Paper (May 2026) [**TP012**] clarifies that funding for Phase 1B and Phase 2 of the CNEB has yet to be secured:

> "*It is anticipated that these sections* [Phase 1B and Phase 2] *will be subject to a future round of DfT/Major Road Network funding combined with potential developer contributions and will be delivered at a later date. The safeguarded route for the bypass is shown on the Local Plan Policies Map.*"

25. The benefits of delivering the full extent of the CNEB are presented in detail by Essex County Council's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) business case[2] for the CNEB, which notably includes that:

    i. the CNEB is essential to deliver long-term ambitions for housing and economic growth set out in both Chelmsford City's Local Plan and Braintree's Local Plan (p.16);

    ii. the CNEB will deliver growth of more than 14,000 new homes between 2019 and 2051 (looking beyond the period of the draft Local Plan) (p.27);

[2] Business Case - HIF/FF/000288/BC/01 - Beaulieu Station and North East Bypass: Chelmsford

iii. the CNEB will deliver economic ambitions: Chelmsford's £3bn local economy is thriving – economic forecasts predict that the contribution the Chelmsford economy makes to the UK will reach £5bn by 2035. Infrastructure constraints in Chelmsford City Centre mean continued economic growth must rely on accessible development to the north east of Chelmsford (p.17);

iv. the CNEB will help Chelmsford make a strong contribution to Essex and the East of England's economic potential within the context of its industrial strategy (p.13);

v. the CNEB will relieve pressure that would otherwise fall on the B1008 and the current A130/A131 as a result of development at the Chelmsford Garden Community and the villages along the corridor of Broomfield, Great Leighs and Great Notley (p.17);

vi. the CNEB will relieve the pressure that will come from Braintree commuters when Beaulieu railway station opens (p.17); and

vii. the CNEB will help reduce congestion on the approach to Broomfield Hospital, which sits on the B1008 that runs parallel to the new Bypass (p.13).

26. The 'Transport Impact Appraisal of the Local Plan Review Pre—Submission' (July 2025) [**T006-A**] anticipates that:

> "*provision of Section 1B of the CNEB scheme will help to reduce capacity pressures at the A131/B1008 Sheepcotes Roundabout, helping to facilitate long-term additional development to the north of Chelmsford, whilst encouraging use of the existing A131 route as a sustainable transport corridor*"[3]

27. The Essex Transport Strategy (August 2026) recognises too the benefits of Phase 1B and Phase 2 of the CNEB:

> "*Phase 1B and 2 – to connect to the A131 at Chatham Green unlocking the remaining housing growth across Chelmsford including Great Leighs and Broomfield and in Braintree district at Great Notley. ECC continue to proactively seek funding for these later phases, including potential developer contributions.*"[4]

[3] p.37, Transport Impact Appraisal of the Local Plan Review Pre—Submission' (July 2025)
[4] Essex Transport Strategy – Place Based Strategy: Chelmsford (August 2026)

28. Given the funding shortfall for the CNEB, it is very important that the Council is able to identify and draw upon development contributions, which should open up further opportunities for funding bids and increase the prospect of such bids being successful. I.e. that unless the Council is able to identify in its plan-making where development contributions for later phases of the CNEB would come from, the task of securing wider funding is more difficult and the risk not being able to do so increased.

29. For example, the Government's Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2) (2020-2025) sets out the following at page 113 in terms of future schemes:

> *"New proposals need to consider a wide range of impacts: not only what can be promised with certainty, but also where a proposal has the potential to support wider and more ambitious local plans for development. We will expect STBs to play an active role in articulating the benefits of proposals being examined in their area. We also expect that where a proposal enables significant development nearby, the developer will contribute to the cost of delivering the scheme. There is also potential for funding from other sources to support a developing proposal. Funding contributions will make a significant difference to the likelihood of government choosing to bring forward a proposal to the next stage, and ultimately to commit it as part of the next RIS'."* *(emphasis added).*

30. Accordingly, it is clear that prospects of bids for infrastructure funding (whether Road Investment Strategy (RIS), HIF or other future sources), which support the delivery of other development, are enhanced where developer funding towards their implementation is secured. This can make a 'significant' difference to the likelihood of government support / commitment as part of future funding decisions.

31. In this context, it is very significant that development on the Site adjacent to the route of the CNEB would be able to make a meaningful financial contribution towards the delivery of its Phase 1B and Phase 2.

Modifications to the Draft Local Plan

32. Against the background presented above, modifications to the draft Local Plan are required to address matters of soundness:

- Strategic Policy S7 (The Spatial Strategy) should be amended to clarify that the proposed spatial strategy is for the period up to 2041 (or any later date as may come out of the Examination); it should then include a new paragraph to present a vision for future growth at Chelmsford Garden

Community, beyond the plan period – necessary to provide an effective strategy for the longer term delivery of CNEB Phase 1B and Phase 2 and be consistent with Framework 2023 paragraph 22:

> "*Beyond the Local Plan period to 2041* [or any later date]*, a longer term vision of further development is to expand northwards the Chelmsford Garden Community. Whilst such growth is subject to due process of future plan making, identifying this broad location for growth provides a strategic framework for coordinating future development with infrastructure provision, including Phases 1B and 2 of the Chelmsford North East Bypass."*

33. This modification is required to support the effectiveness of Strategic Policy S9 (Infrastructure Requirements) by linking the proposed highway infrastructure to a clearer strategy for longer-term growth. Safeguarding the bypass route is important, but does not itself establish how the later phases will be funded or delivered. Identifying land north of Wheelers Hill as a broad location for future growth would strengthen the case for public funding and provide a potential source of developer contributions towards those phases.

34. This modification to Strategic Policy S7 is also necessary to ensure Policy S10 (Securing Infrastructure and Impact Mitigation) can be considered effective. Policy S10 requires infrastructure to be provided in a timely manner, which for Phase 1B and Phase 2 of the CNEB is more likely to be achieved where a longer term vision for future development at Chelmsford Garden Community, beyond the plan period, is presented now by the draft Local Plan.

[21/10/26]