

Chelmsford Local Plan Review 2022 – 2041

Examination

Inspectors – Mr H Baugh-Jones BA(Hons) DipLA MA CMLI

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Programme Officer – Mrs Annette Feeney

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EXAMINATION GUIDANCE NOTE

This note should be read in conjunction with the Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) document and the Draft Hearing Programme. References in brackets () are to the documents in the Examination Library which can be viewed on the Examination website: www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy-and-local-plan/local-plan-review/

Key Dates

21 October 2026 (12 noon) - deadline to confirm or re-confirm with the Programme Officer whether you wish to exercise your right to appear at a hearing session.

21 October 2026 (12 noon) - submission of hearing statements.

10 November 2026 - Hearing sessions begin

The Inspector's role in the Examination

1. We have been appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the soundness of the Plan and whether it meets the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the associated Regulations. The Plan being examined is the Chelmsford Local Plan 2022-2041 (the Plan). It comprises the Pre-Submission (Regulation 19 Document) February 2025 and the Focused Consultation on Additional Sites (Regulation 19 Document) November 2025.
2. We are examining the Plan under the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2023. The NPPF makes clear that, to be sound, a Local Plan should be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. There are three possible outcomes to the Examination:
 - the submitted plan is sound;
 - the submitted plan is not sound but could be made sound by changes (known as *main modifications*), if necessary following additional work; or
 - the submitted plan is not sound and could not be made sound by changes.

3. Following the close of the hearing sessions we will prepare a report to the Council with our conclusions. Our report will deal with broad issues rather than with individual representations.

The Programme Officer

4. The Programme Officer for the examination is Mrs Annette Feeney. For the purposes of the Examination, she is working under our direction independently of the Council. She can be contacted using the details at the head of this note.
5. The main tasks of the Programme Officer are to act as a channel of communication between all parties and us, to liaise with the parties to ensure the smooth running of the Examination, to ensure that all documents received are recorded and distributed and to run the Examination Library. Copies of supporting evidence documents can be found on the Examination website. This is hosted on the Council's website, but its content is controlled by the Inspectors and the Programme Officer.
6. Any participant who does not have access to the internet should contact the Programme Officer to arrange access to the library. Any procedural questions or other matters that you wish to raise before the hearing sessions should be made through the Programme Officer.

Representations on the Plan

7. Two Regulation 19 consultations took place. The first of these related to the Pre-Submission (Regulation 19 Document) and was from 4 February 2025 – 18 March 2025. The second related to the Focused Consultation on Additional Sites (Regulation 19 Document) which took place from 20 November 2025 – 8 January 2026. Details of these consultations are set out in the 'Regulation 22 Consultation Statement' (SD003). It has also published the representations on the Examination website (SD010; SD011; SD012 and; SD013).
8. A full set of the representations made on the Plan at the Regulation 19 stage has been provided to us and we will take them all into account. The legislation does not require us to take account of any representations made at any earlier stage, including under Regulation 18.

Arrangements for the Hearing Sessions

9. The Examination hearing sessions will take place on:
10 - 12; 17 - 19 November and; 1 - 3 December 2026.
10. The hearing sessions will be held in person in the Council Chamber at the Chelmsford City Council Civic Centre at, Duke Street, Chelmsford CM1 1JE. Representors who submitted a response during the Regulation 19 consultation

seeking to change the Plan have a right to appear before and be heard by the Inspector at the hearing sessions.¹

Participation at the Hearing Sessions

11. A draft programme will be sent out on **2 October 2026**. If you have a right to be heard and you wish to exercise that right, you should contact the Programme Officer by noon on **21 October 2026** indicating which session you wish to participate in. Please note that if you do not contact the Programme Officer by that date, it will be assumed that you do not wish to appear, and you will not be listed as a participant. Only one participant is allowed per representor. However, in view of their position in covering the whole Plan sometimes more Council representatives may take part in a hearing session.
12. Before deciding whether to appear, representors should familiarise themselves with the Council's broad responses to the main issues raised in the representations to the Plan in the Regulation 22 Statement of Consultation.²
13. Representors who are not seeking changes to the Plan, including those who have made representations supporting it, do not have a right to take part in the hearings. However, we may invite additional participants to take part if that would assist in determining the soundness and legal compliance of the Plan.
14. The hearings programme will be finalised as soon as possible after 21 October 2026 and published on the Examination website before the start of the hearings. **Please note that it is for individual participants to check the hearing programme, either on the website or with the Programme Officer, and to ensure that they are present at the right time.** If you are unable to attend a session for which you are listed as a participant, please let the Programme Officer know as soon as possible.
15. Written representations carry the same weight as those made at the hearing sessions and we will have equal regard to views put at the hearings or in writing. Attendance at a hearing session will only be useful and helpful to us if you wish to participate in the discussion.

Participating in a Hearing Session

16. The Matters, Issues and Questions will form the basis of the discussion at the hearing sessions and should be the basis on which any further written statements are prepared. The hearings will take the form of a roundtable discussion which we shall lead. They will not involve the formal presentation of cases by participants or cross-examination. Each matter will be the subject of separate discussion, although the discussion on some matters may take place over more than one hearing session. We will take account of all the written representations already submitted and it is not the purpose of the hearings for these to be repeated.

¹ S20(6) of the PCPA 2004

² Document CD/12

17. On **10 November 2026, the session will start at 10am**. All other sessions will normally run between 09:30 and 17:00 each day with the exception of **Tuesday 17 and Tuesday 1 December, which will start at 10am**. A break will be taken for lunch at around 13:00 as well as mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks. On occasion, there may be a need for flexibility to finish a particular session. Please let the Programme Officer know as soon as possible if you have any specific needs in relation to attendance and participation at the hearing sessions.

Privacy

18. The hearing sessions will be conducted in line with the Council's data protection policies and processes as set out here: www.chelmsford.gov.uk/your-council/accessing-council-information/data-protection/

Hearing statements

19. The Council should produce a response to each of the questions set out in the MIQs. We would strongly encourage concise answers and where appropriate, questions can be answered by providing references to specific parts of the evidence base.
20. Other representors who have a right to participate in the hearings can also submit further statements, but **only on the questions of relevance to their original representation**. However, it is not a requirement to submit a hearing statement if you wish to rely on your original representation.
21. Hearing statements should be a maximum of 3000 words for each Main Matter. Within this limit, they should be kept as short as possible. Appendices should not be submitted. As the Council must answer all the questions, it is not subject to the word limit.

In addition, you should ensure the following:

- Please submit a separate statement for each matter being addressed
 - Only answer the specific questions which are of relevance to your original representation made at the Regulation 19 stage
 - Clearly identify the number(s) of the question(s) being answered
 - Indicate whether any other changes are needed to make the Plan sound (providing detailed suggested wording for the change and if appropriate, any changes sought to the Policies Map)
 - The name of the representor and a cross reference to the original response are included, this should be by representation number which is available from the Programme Officer
22. **An electronic version of each hearing statement should be submitted to the Programme Officer by 12 noon on 21 October 2026.** Paper copies are not required but if you wish to submit in that format, please contact the Programme Officer to make the necessary arrangements. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, late submissions will not be accepted.

23. Hearing statements will be posted on the Examination website, so that they are available to all participants and anyone else who wishes to read them. Because they will be available in this way, they will not be circulated directly to participants. However, anyone who is unable to access them on the website should contact the Programme Officer to make alternative arrangements for viewing.
24. Aside from the hearing statements, no other written evidence will be accepted unless we specifically request it. The hearing sessions should not be used to introduce new evidence.

Changes to the Plan

25. The starting point is that the Council has submitted a Plan which it considers to be sound and ready for Examination. At this stage there are only two means by which changes can be made to the submitted Plan:
 - (1) main modifications recommended by the Inspectors;
 - (2) additional modifications made by the Council on adoption.
26. However, we can only recommend main modifications if they are necessary to resolve problems that would otherwise make the submitted Plan unsound or not legally compliant.³ Main modifications are changes which, either alone or in combination with others, would materially alter the Plan or its policies. Any potential main modifications must be subject to consultation and further Sustainability Appraisal and assessment under the Habitats Regulations might also be needed.
27. 'Additional modifications' are those changes which would not materially affect the policies in the Plan⁴. They are made by the Council on adoption and are also sometimes referred to as 'minor modifications.' They are likely to include corrections of typographical errors, factual updating and consequential changes. The Council is accountable for any such changes, and they do not fall within the scope of the Examination.
28. The Council has proposed some main modifications to the Plan in the 'Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications June 2026 (SD005)' and further changes will be discussed at the next hearing sessions. However, it is important to note that the basis for the Examination is the submitted Plan not including the suggested changes.

Rejected/Omission Sites

29. It is not part of our role to examine the soundness of rejected or alternative sites put forward by representors. Consequently, discussion at the hearing sessions should focus on whether the proposed site allocations in the submitted Plan are sound.

³ Under section 20(7B) & (7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

⁴ S23(3)(b) of the PCPA 2004 "... if the additional modifications (taken together) do not materially affect the policies ..."

Site Visits and Close of the Examination

30. If we consider it necessary to our assessment of the soundness of the Plan, we will visit sites and areas referred to in the representations before, during, or after the hearings. We will do these on an unaccompanied basis unless there is a need to go onto private land in which case arrangements will be made by the Programme Officer as necessary.
31. The Examination will remain open until our report has been submitted to the Council. However, we will not accept any further representations or evidence after the hearing sessions have ended unless we specifically request it. Late or unsolicited material may be returned.

Further Information

32. Further information about the examination of Local Plans can be found in the Planning Practice Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-plans>, the Procedure Guide for Local Plan Examinations August 2026 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/examining-local-plans-procedural-practice/procedure-guide-for-local-plan-examinations> and Local Plans: Taking Part in Examinations <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/taking-part-in-local-plan-examinations>.

H Baugh-Jones and R Morgan

INSPECTORS