

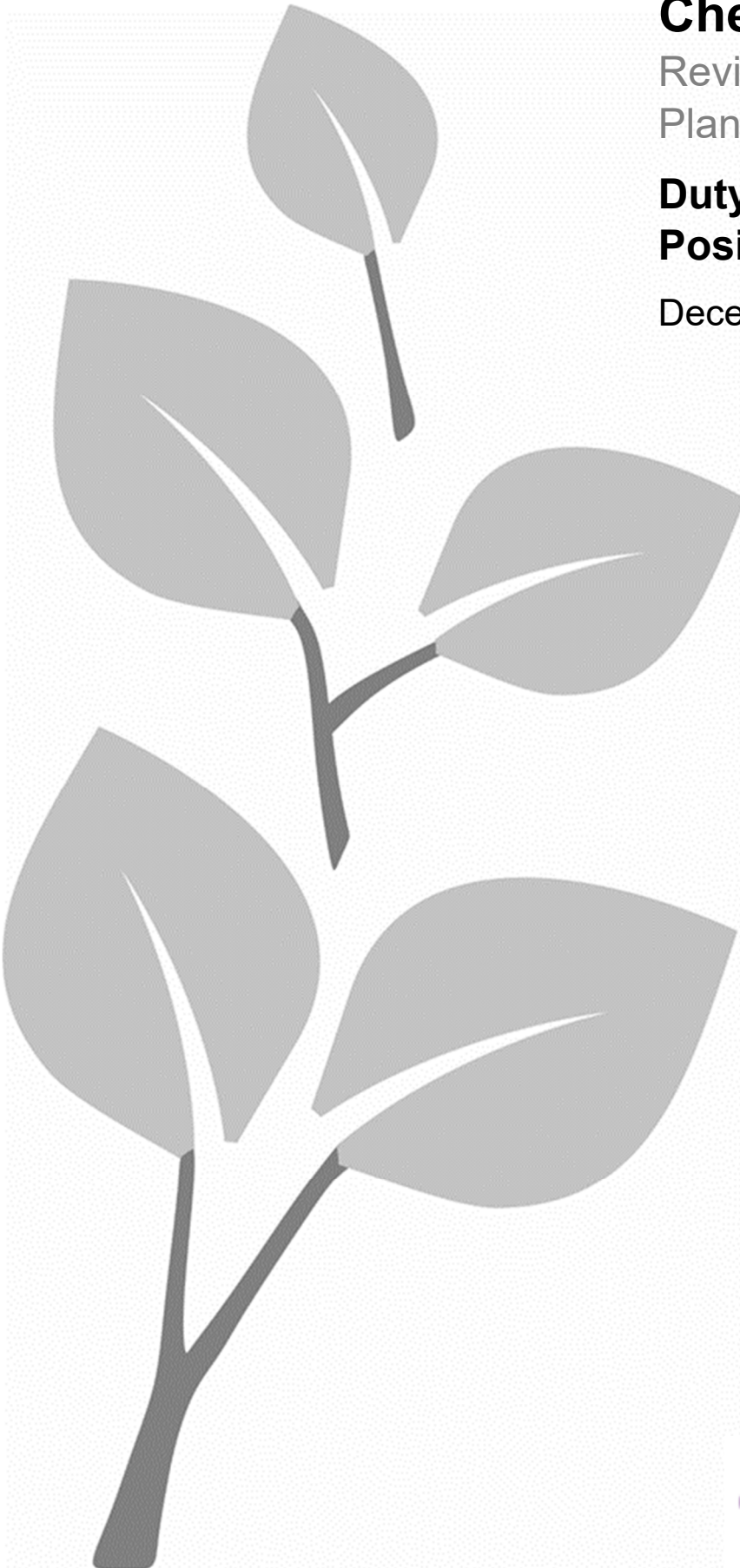
**DTC002**

# **Chelmsford Local Plan**

Review of the adopted Local Plan

## **Duty to Co-operate Position Statement**

December 2024



## **1. Purpose of the Position Statement**

This position statement provides an update on the activities undertaken by Chelmsford City Council (CCC) in respect to the Duty to Co-operate on the Review of the adopted Chelmsford Local Plan. The update covers activities including the Issues and Options Local Plan consultation launched in August 2022, and the Preferred Options Local Plan consultation launched in May 2024. It also discusses future activities which will be further informed by formal consultation on the Pre-Submission Local Plan consultation starting in February 2025.

## **2. Introduction**

The Duty to Co-operate (DtC) is set out in the [2024 National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) (from Paragraph 24). This requires Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to co-operate with each other and other prescribed bodies on strategic planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, such as providing land for new homes, jobs and infrastructure. These have a wider impact than local issues and cannot be dealt with by one LPA alone. The Duty to Co-operate is the process by which strategic issues are planned for at a local level.

LPAs must produce evidence at a future Local Plan Examination to satisfy the Independent Inspector that their Development Plan has met the legal test with regard to the Duty to Co-operate. It is expected that the co-operation sought has been an ongoing process of engagement from initial scoping of a plan through to its preparation and implementation. The end result should be a plan that allocates land and promotes infrastructure provision to support future levels of sustainable growth and development, and which aligns with those of other strategic bodies. It is also expected that the co-operation sought has been constructive, pro-active and that the outcomes of collaborative working are embedded in the plan.

Although the Duty to Co-operate is not a duty to agree, the City Council makes every effort to seek co-operation on cross-boundary and strategic planning matters in a focused, positive and structured way. At the same time, the City Council will continue to work constructively with nearby planning authorities on their own local plan preparation.

## **3. What has happened so far?**

### Pre-Consultation

The City Council undertook a variety of Duty to Co-operate activities in advance of starting the review of the adopted Local Plan.

The Duty to Co-operate Strategy relating to the [adopted Local Plan \(2020\)](#) was refreshed in advance of work commencing on the review of the adopted Local Plan, to ensure we are taking the correct approach to meeting the duty. Public bodies who are subject to the Duty to Co-operate were invited to comment, and we used the feedback to finalise the Strategy.

The updated [Duty to Co-operate Strategy](#) was published in January 2022. The key strategic matters identified through the consultation are as follows:

- Delivering homes for all including Gypsy and Traveller accommodation
- Jobs and economy including green employment and regeneration
- Retail, leisure, and cultural development
- Sustainable transport, highways and active travel
- Climate change action and mitigation including flood risk and zero carbon
- Natural and historic environment including increased biodiversity and green/blue/wild spaces and connectivity of ecological networks
- Community infrastructure including education, health and community facilities
- Utility infrastructure including communications, waste, water and energy
- London Stansted Airport future airspace redesign.

Since the adoption of the Local Plan in May 2020 the Council has responded to a range of consultations from Essex LPAs, Essex County Council, and National Highways. The details, and a list of other collaborative work, is set out in the Council's [Annual Monitoring Reports](#) for 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24.

### Issues and Options

The Issues and Options consultation for the review of the Local Plan ran from August to October 2022. The consultation document reviewed and updated the key issues for the future growth and development of Chelmsford, with potential Spatial Options for addressing projected growth up to 2041.

Comments were received from 12 Duty to Co-operate bodies and specific consultees including neighbouring LPAs, Essex County Council (ECC), Historic England, Environment Agency, Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board.

A summary of the main issues raised in the representations is contained within the Issues and Options You Said We Did Feedback Report published in May 2024, available on this page: [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review). All the responses were carefully considered and used to progress the second formal stage in the preparation of the Chelmsford Local Plan – the Preferred Options Local Plan.

Comments informed the approach to developing the preferred Spatial Strategy and the assessment of reasonable alternatives, and were considered in the forming of new policies relating to health and wellbeing, connectivity and travel, the future of the City Centre, and net zero carbon development. There were also minor changes to the content including updated data, and references to issues including provision for nature and ecology, access and connections, and tall buildings guidance.

### Preferred Options

The Preferred Options consultation for the review of the Local Plan ran from May to June 2024. The consultation document set out proposed sites where new homes, jobs and other facilities could be located to meet CCC's needs to 2041, along with

updated development management policies that we would use to decide planning applications.

Comments were received from 17 Duty to Co-operate bodies and specific consultees including neighbouring LPAs, Essex County Council (ECC), Historic England, Environment Agency, Highways England, and the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board.

A summary of the main issues raised in the representations is contained within the Preferred Options Feedback Report published in October 2024, available on this page: [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review). All the responses have been carefully considered and used to progress the third formal stage in the preparation of the Chelmsford Local Plan – the Pre-Submission Local Plan.

Comments were mainly supportive of the key Plan elements including the Vision, Strategic Priorities, Spatial Principles, Spatial Strategy, and Development Management policies. Detailed comments have influenced amendments to the Pre-Submission Local Plan including in relation to accessible greenspace and natural habitats, addressing recreational pressure on Sites of Special Scientific Interest, water efficiency targets, and changes for consistency and clarity.

### **Duty to Co-operate Meetings and Discussions**

Regular meetings/discussions continue to be held with Essex County Council, other local authorities in Essex, the principal health and education providers in Chelmsford and other key partners such as Highways England, as part of the ongoing programme of Duty to Co-operate activity.

As the current Local Plan activity is a review of the adopted Local Plan, many aspects of the Plan's content and approach are unchanged, meaning that major changes are limited. In addition, the preferred Spatial Strategy has only recently been developed to a stage where meaningful discussions can take place. However, these meetings/discussions have still been valuable in enabling issues affecting the future growth of Chelmsford to be identified at an early stage, and for officers to continue partnership working with those bodies to take forward the review of the Local Plan.

The Council also discusses strategic matters and Local Plan preparation at ongoing established strategic partnerships including the Essex Planning Officers Society (EPOA), Eastern Community Homes, and the Chelmsford and Braintree Public Transport Group.

Examples of ongoing meetings and the topics discussed is included below:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Topics</b>
ECC	Biodiversity net gain Minerals Local Plan and links to CCC Local Plan preparation Transport Education

	Net zero policy
Maldon District Council	Evidence base updates Local Plan timetables Cross boundary issues such as traffic and education needs
Basildon District Council	Employment and economy workshop
Braintree District Council	Local Plan progress Housing requirements Evidence base documents
Joint meeting with Brentwood and Rochford Councils	General updates on timing and evidence base Infrastructure Delivery Plan
Castle Point Council	Sustainable transport connectivity between South Essex and Chelmsford, and a desire to improve north-south sustainable travel connectivity
Colchester City Council	Transport matters including A12 widening and A120 improvement proposals
Thurrock Council	Local Plan progress Housing needs in relation to Green Belt Transport matters including A12 widening
National Grid	Ongoing engagement on East Anglia GREEN (Norwich to Tilbury) power lines proposal
National Highways	Traffic modelling for Local Plan preparation Strategic road programmes
NHS Integrated Care System (Mid and South Essex ICS)	Updates on Local Plan preparation Healthcare needs

### **Commissioning of joint evidence base studies and reports**

Due to the different timings of preparation for other LPA's Local Plans, and changes in the way that housing numbers are derived, there have been fewer opportunities to work collaboratively on joint evidence base studies than during preparation of the now adopted Local Plan.

The revised NPPF published in December 2024 includes transitional periods for LPAs to progress a new or reviewed Local Plan at an advanced stage, such as Chelmsford. It is proposed that the Pre-Submission Local Plan will be submitted for examination later in 2025 providing an opportunity for further joint evidence base work, where necessary before Submission. The response from other Essex LPAs to the transitional arrangements is mixed, with some continuing with progress and others reviewing the revised regulations which will guide consultation and submission dates.

However, the following are key areas where recent joint working is helping to inform the review of the Local Plan:

Net zero carbon – a comprehensive evidence base has been collaboratively established between the Essex Climate Action Commission, Essex County Council and Essex LPAs. The aim of the evidence base is to provide a clearly defined, consistent planning policy approach to net zero carbon development providing much needed certainty and clarity to the development industry and other stakeholders. This has been translated into a proposed new policy introduced at Preferred Options stage, included as DM31 Net Zero Carbon (In Operation). A detailed account of the evidence and policy development was contained within the Climate Change Topic paper prepared to accompany the Preferred Options consultation, which will be updated for the Pre-Submission stage.

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment – CCC has engaged with other LPAs, the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and the Environment Agency for relevant information to support the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) evidence update for the plan consultations.

Chelmsford Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2024 – the Council alongside the other Essex local authorities undertook an updated Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

Retail Capacity Study Update 2023 – CCC has engaged with neighbouring LPAs for relevant information to inform this evidence base update.

Water Cycle Study Reports 2024 – Regular consultation was undertaken throughout the preparation of the Scoping WCS and Detailed WCS reports with the Environment Agency.

Infrastructure Delivery Plan Reports – Engagement with infrastructure providers and key stakeholders on these evidence base documents including LPAs, ECC, Natural England, NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board.

Transport modelling – CCC has worked with ECC, as the local Highway and Transportation Authority to prepare the transport evidence base which has also been informed by discussions with National Highways.

Parking guidance – CCC has contributed to Essex-wide consultation on updated parking guidance, which includes provision for electric charging points, and which has been translated into Local Plan policy.

#### **4. Statements of Common Ground**

Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) set out how strategic matters or issues of a common nature between a local authority and a statutory body or organisation are being addressed and progressed throughout the plan-making process to provide transparency, and wherever possible, show where parties are working towards areas of agreement.

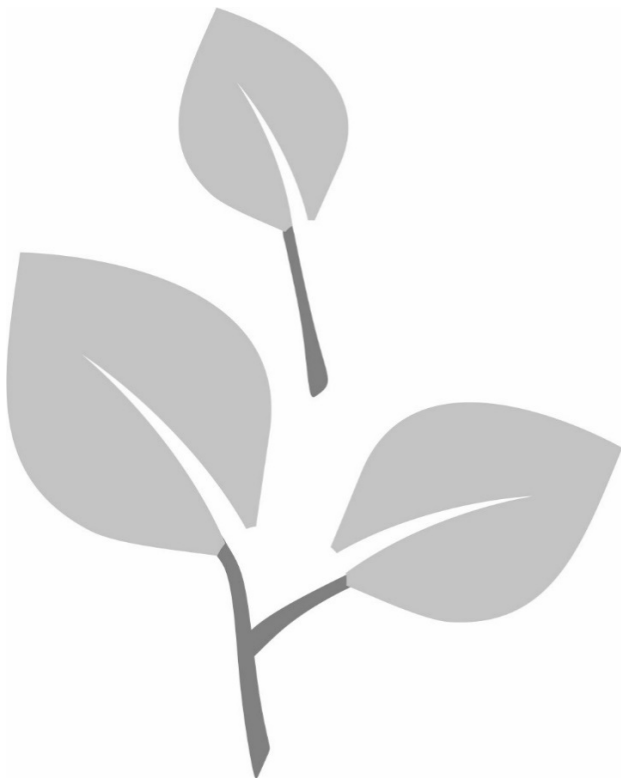
SoCG are being prepared to record agreement between CCC and each of Chelmsford's neighbouring authorities, Essex County Council, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. Agreed SoCG will be published

alongside the Pre-Submission consultation and reviewed ahead of Submission of the plan for Independent Examination. The aim will be to resolve any outstanding matters where cross-boundary strategic matters will be addressed by email and/or DtC meetings.

## **5. What will happen next?**

The Pre-Submission Local Plan consultation is planned to run from 4 February until 18 March 2025. The City Council will arrange Duty to Co-operate Officer and Member meetings for adjoining LPAs during the formal consultation period to discuss any strategic matters that may affect the preparation of Chelmsford's Local Plan and opportunities for further joint work. The Council will also respond to any requests for additional meetings or formal discussions with Duty to Co-operate bodies that may be made.

Following the consultation, the City Council will submit the consultation documents and all the representations received to the Independent Inspector, prior to formal Examination anticipated to take place later in 2025.



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