

Chelmsford City Council

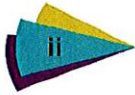
Chelmsford Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document

Non-Technical Summary to the Sustainability Appraisal Report



November 2015

Amec Foster Wheeler Environment
& Infrastructure UK Limited



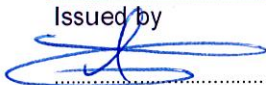
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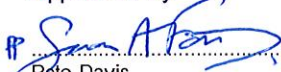
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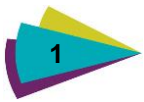
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Document revisions

No.	Details	Date
1	Draft NTS	26.10.15
2	Final NTS	28.10.15
3	Revised Final NTS	09.11.15



Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

This Non-Technical Summary (NTS) provides an overview of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Chelmsford Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document (the Issues and Options Consultation Document). The SA is being carried out on behalf of Chelmsford City Council (the Council) by Amec Foster Wheeler Environment and Infrastructure UK Ltd (Amec Foster Wheeler) to help integrate sustainable development into the emerging Local Plan.

The following sections of this NTS:

- ▶ provide an overview of the new Chelmsford Local Plan and the Issues and Options Consultation Document;
- ▶ describe the approach to undertaking the SA of the Issues and Options Consultation Document;
- ▶ summarise the findings of the SA of the Issues and Options Consultation Document; and
- ▶ set out the next steps in the SA of the Local Plan.

What is the Chelmsford Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document?

The Chelmsford Local Plan will be a new single planning policy document. It will set out how much new development will be accommodated in Chelmsford City Council's Administrative Area out to 2036 and where this growth will be located. It will also contain planning policies and land allocations. For brevity, the term 'the City Area' is used throughout this document to describe the Council's administrative area.

The Issues and Options Consultation Document is the first stage of consultation on the new Local Plan. The Issues and Options Consultation Document sets out the planning issues that face Chelmsford over the next 15 years and options for the way they could be addressed. The key elements of the document include:

- ▶ Spatial Principles (the high level objectives that guide the approach to the Local Plan);
- ▶ Housing Target Projections (options relating to how many houses should be built up to 2036);
- ▶ Employment Target Projections (options relating to how many jobs should be supported up to 2036); and
- ▶ Spatial Options (options relating to where new development should go).

Further information about the preparation of the Local Plan and the Issues and Options Consultation Document is set out in Section 1.3 and Section 1.4 of the SA Report and is available via the Council's website: www.chelmsford.gov.uk/new-local-plan.

What is Sustainability Appraisal?

National planning policy¹ states that local plans are key to delivering sustainable development. Sustainable development is that which seeks to strike a balance between economic, environmental and social factors to

¹ See paragraph 150-151 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012).

enable people to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It is very important that the Chelmsford Local Plan contributes to a sustainable future for the plan area. To support this objective, the Council is required to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Local Plan². SA is a means of ensuring that the likely social, economic and environmental effects of the Local Plan are identified, described and appraised and also incorporates a process set out under a European Directive³ and related UK regulations⁴ called Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Where negative effects are identified, measures will be proposed to avoid, minimise or mitigate such effects. Where any positive effects are identified, measures will be considered that could enhance such effects. SA will therefore be an integral part of the preparation of the Local Plan.

There are five key stages in the SA process which are shown in **Figure NTS.1**.

What Has Happened So Far?

The first stage (**Stage A**) of the SA process involved consultation on a SA Scoping Report. The Scoping Report set out the proposed approach to the appraisal of the Local Plan including a SA Framework and was subject to consultation that ran from 24th July to 11th September 2015.

Stage B is an iterative process involving the appraisal and refinement of the Local Plan with the findings presented in interim SA Reports published alongside the Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document, Preferred Options Consultation and Draft Pre-Submission Local Plan. The SA Report to which this NTS relates represents the first formal output of Stage B.

At **Stage C**, a Submission draft SA Report will be prepared to accompany the submission draft Local Plan and will be available for consultation alongside the draft Local Plan itself prior to consideration by an independent planning inspector (**Stage D**).

Following Examination in Public (EiP), the Council will issue a Post Adoption Statement as soon as reasonably practicable after the adoption of the Local Plan. During the period of the Local Plan, the Council will monitor its implementation and any significant social, economic and environmental effects (**Stage E**).

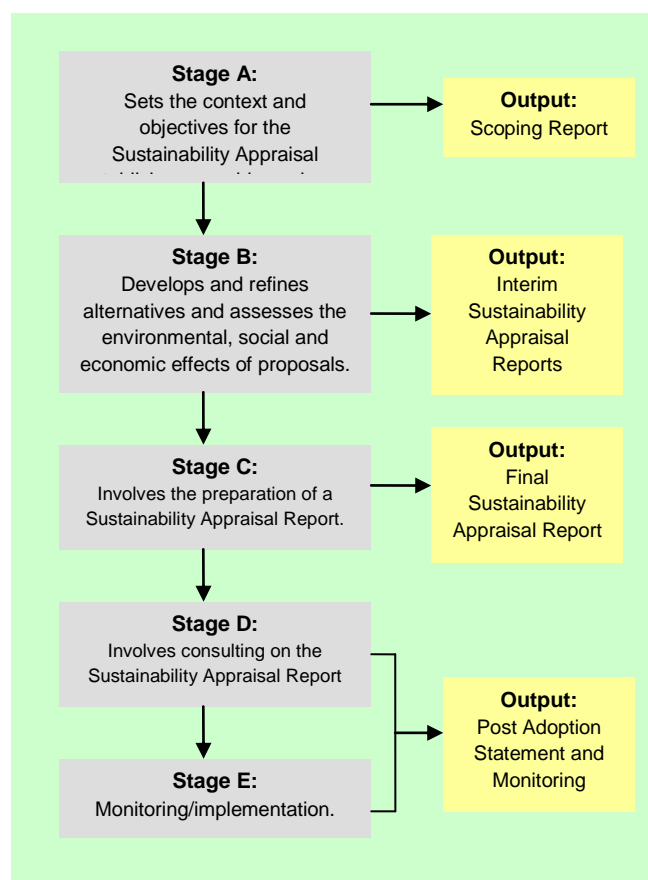


Figure NTS.1 The SA Process

Section 1.5 of the SA Report describes in further detail the requirement for SA of local plans and the SA process including its relationship with the preparation of the Chelmsford Local Plan.

² The requirement for SA of local plans is set out under section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

³ Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

⁴ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (statutory instrument 2004 No. 1633).

How has the Issues and Options Consultation Document Been Appraised?

To support the appraisal of the Local Plan, a SA Framework has been developed. This contains a series of sustainability objectives and guide questions that reflect both the current socio-economic and environmental issues which may affect (or be affected by) the Local Plan and the objectives contained within other plans and programmes reviewed for their relevance to the SA and Local Plan. The SA objectives are shown in **Table NTS 1**.

Table NTS 1 SA Objectives Used to Appraise the Issues and Options Consultation Document

SA Objective

- 1. Biodiversity and Geodiversity:** To conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity and promote improvements to the green infrastructure network.
- 2. Housing:** To meet the housing needs of the Chelmsford City Area and deliver decent homes.
- 3. Economy, Skills and Employment:** To achieve a strong and stable economy which offers rewarding and well located employment opportunities to everyone.
- 4. Sustainable Living and Revitalisation:** To promote urban renaissance and support the vitality of rural centres, tackle deprivation and promote sustainable living.
- 5. Health and Wellbeing:** To improve the health and well being of those living and working in the Chelmsford City Area.
- 6. Transport:** To reduce the need to travel, promote more sustainable modes of transport and align investment in infrastructure with growth.
- 7. Land Use and Soils:** To encourage the efficient use of land and conserve and enhance soils.
- 8. Water:** To conserve and enhance water quality and resources.
- 9. Flood Risk and Coastal Erosion:** To reduce the risk of flooding and coastal erosion to people and property, taking into account the effects of climate change.
- 10. Air:** To improve air quality.
- 11. Climate Change:** To minimise greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change.
- 12. Waste and Natural Resources:** To promote the waste hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle, recover) and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.
- 13. Cultural Heritage:** To conserve and enhance the historic environment, cultural heritage, character and setting.
- 14. Landscape and Townscape:** To conserve and enhance landscape character and townscapes.

The Spatial Principles have been assessed for their compatibility with the SA objectives. The Housing Target Projections, Employment Projections and Spatial Options contained in the Issues and Options Consultation Document have been appraised using matrices to identify likely significant effects on the SA objectives. A qualitative scoring system has been adopted which is set out in **Table NTS 2**.

Table NTS 2 Scoring System Used in the Appraisal of the Issues and Options Consultation Document

Score	Description	Symbol
Significant Positive Effect	The option contributes significantly to the achievement of the objective.	++
Minor Positive Effect	The option contributes to the achievement of the objective but not significantly.	+
Neutral	The option does not have any effect on the achievement of the objective	0
Minor Negative Effect	The option detracts from the achievement of the objective but not significantly.	-
Significant Negative Effect	The option detracts significantly from the achievement of the objective.	--
No Relationship	There is no clear relationship between the option and the achievement of the objective or the relationship is negligible.	~
Uncertain	The option has an uncertain relationship to the objective or the relationship is dependent on the way in which the aspect is managed. In addition, insufficient information may be available to enable an appraisal to be made.	?

NB: where more than one symbol/colour is presented in a box it indicates that the appraisal has identified both positive and negative effects. Where a box is coloured but also contains a '?', this indicates uncertainty over whether the effect could be a minor or significant effect although a professional judgement is expressed in the colour used. A conclusion of uncertainty arises where there is insufficient evidence for expert judgement to conclude an effect.

Section 4 of the SA Report provides further information in relation to the approach to the appraisal of the Issues and Options Consultation Document.

What Are the Findings of the Appraisal of the Issues and Options Consultation Document?

Spatial Principles

The Issues and Options Consultation Document sets out the following nine Spatial Principles that are intended to support and guide the spatial options for the Local Plan:

- ▶ Maximise the use of brownfield land for development;
- ▶ Continue the renewal of Chelmsford's City Centre and Urban Area;
- ▶ Protect the Green Belt;
- ▶ Locate development at well-connected sustainable locations;
- ▶ Protect the river valleys by defining Green Wedges;
- ▶ Respect the character of the existing settlement pattern including the potential designation of Green Buffers;
- ▶ Protect the character and value of important landscapes, heritage and biodiversity;
- ▶ Ensure new development is deliverable and can be built within the Plan period; and
- ▶ Ensure that new development is served by necessary infrastructure.

The Spatial Principles have been tested for their compatibility with the SA objectives. This compatibility assessment found the Spatial Principles to be broadly supportive of the SA objectives and in particular urban renaissance and sustainable living. This reflects their emphasis on supporting urban renewal and delivering development in accessible locations. Reflecting the desire to focus development towards urban areas, and

allied with the intent to protect the Green Belt, Green Wedges and landscape character, the Spatial Principles are also considered to be particularly supportive of those SA objectives relating to biodiversity, health and wellbeing, land use, cultural heritage and landscape.

The assessment has identified that in some instances, conflicts may exist between the Spatial Principles and the SA objectives, or their relationship is uncertain. Where conflicts or uncertainties have been identified, this generally relates to, on the one hand, the aspiration for growth, and on the other, the need to protect and enhance environmental assets and minimise resource use, waste and greenhouse gas emissions. However, where possible incompatibilities or uncertainties have been identified, these can be resolved if development takes place in accordance with all of the Spatial Principles. As such, an incompatibility or uncertainty is not necessarily an insurmountable issue but one that may need to be considered in the development of policies that comprise the Local Plan.

The completed compatibility assessment is presented in Section 5.2 of the SA Report.

Housing Target Projections

A total of three housing target projections have been identified in the Issues and Options Consultation Document and appraised as part of the SA Report. The options are as follows:

- ▶ Option 1: National Household Projections - 657 dwellings per year (9,885 dwellings over the plan period).
- ▶ Option 2: Objectively Assessed Need - 775 dwellings per year (11,625 dwellings over the plan period).
- ▶ Option 3: Objectively Assessed Need and a 20% Buffer - 930 dwellings per year (13,950 dwellings over the plan period, rounded to 14,000 dwellings in the Issues and Options Consultation Document).

Each housing requirement has been appraised against the SA objectives. The findings of the appraisal are summarised in **Table NTS 3**.

Table NTS 3 Housing Target Projections Appraisal

Option	1. Biodiversity	2. Housing	3. Economy	4. Urban Renaissance	5. Health and Wellbeing	6. Transport	7. Land Use	8. Water	9. Flood Risk	10. Air Quality	11. Climate Change	12. Waste and Natural Resources	13. Cultural Heritage	14. Landscape and Townscape
Option 1: 657 dwellings per year	-/?	++/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	-	-/?	-/?	-/?	-	+/- /?	+/- /?
Option 2: 775 dwellings per year	-/?	++	+	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	-	-/?	-/?	-/?	-	+/- /?	+/- /?
Option 3: 930 dwellings per year	-/?	++	++	+/-	+/-	+/- /?	+/-	-/?	-/?	-/?	-/?	-	+/- /?	+/- /?

The range and type of effects associated with all three housing target projections are similar with significant positive and positive effects identified in respect of housing and the economy in particular but negative effects expected in respect of biodiversity, air quality, water, flood risk, climate change and waste and resource use. Significant negative effects have been identified in respect of land use for all projections. This reflects the substantial area of greenfield land that is likely to be required to accommodate housing growth over the plan period.

The findings of the appraisal indicate that Option 2 (a housing target of 775 dwellings per year) and Option 3 (930 dwellings per year) are the best performing options when considered against the SA objectives. Both options would meet the City Area's objectively assessed need for housing although Option 3 would result in a housing target that exceeds this requirement and in consequence, it would be expected to deliver the greatest benefits in terms of housing delivery and economic growth of all three options. However, reflecting the scale of growth under this option, the magnitude of negative effects across a number of the environmental SA objectives may be increased relative to Options 1 and 2.

The level of housing delivery proposed under Option 1 (657 dwellings per annum) would fall short of the City Area's objectively assessed housing need. In consequence, this option is likely to result in the current and future housing needs of the City Area going unmet.

Detailed matrices containing the appraisal of the housing target projections are presented in Appendix F to the SA Report. The findings of these appraisals are summarised in Section 5.3 of the SA Report.

Employment Target Projections

Two employment target projections have been appraised as part of the SA Report:

- ▶ Option 1: 2012 Sub-National Population Projections based - 727 jobs per year.
- ▶ Option 2: Employed People - 887 jobs per year.

Each employment target projection has been appraised against the SA objectives. The findings of the appraisal are summarised in **Table NTS 4**.

Table NTS 4 Employment Target Projections Appraisal

Option	1. Biodiversity	2. Housing	3. Economy	4. Urban Renaissance	5. Health and Wellbeing	6. Transport	7. Land Use	8. Water	9. Flood Risk	10. Air Quality	11. Climate Change	12. Waste and Natural Resources	13. Cultural Heritage	14. Landscape and Townscape
Option 1: 727 jobs per annum	-/?	0	++/- -	+	-	-	+/- /?	-	-/?	-	-	-	+/- /?	+/- /?
Option 2: 887 jobs per annum	-/?	0	++/- -	+	-	-	+/- /?	-	-/?	-	-	-	+/- /?	+/- /?

Overall, the range and type of effects associated with both employment target projections are similar. Significant positive effects have been identified in respect of the economy with more minor positive effects expected on urban renaissance. No significant negative effects were identified during the assessment although there is the potential for adverse effects across the majority of the other SA objectives used in the appraisal.

The findings of the appraisal highlight that Option 2 would deliver the greatest economic benefits of the two options appraised, commensurate with the greater number of jobs that would be delivered under this option. However, the magnitude of adverse effects could also be greater than Option 1, although this would be largely dependent on the exact location of future development which is currently unknown.

Detailed matrices containing the appraisal of the employment target projections are presented in Appendix G to the SA Report. The findings of these appraisals are summarised in Section 5.4 of the SA Report.

Spatial Options

The following three spatial options relating to the future distribution of development in the Chelmsford City Area are set out in the Issues and Options Consultation Document:

- ▶ **Option 1- Urban Focus:** This option seeks to concentrate new development at locations within and/or close to the existing urban areas that are within Chelmsford. These are the urban areas of Chelmsford, where the majority of new development would be planned, on land to the north of the town of South Woodham Ferrers and on land to the north and east of Great Leighs which is two miles south of Braintree and which would provide linkages to development planned in Braintree District.
- ▶ **Option 2- Urban Focus and Growth on Key Transport Corridors:** This option also promotes development at locations within and/or close to the existing urban areas, but to a lesser extent than contained in Option 1. The remaining development would be planned at locations on the key transport corridors serving the district, notably the A130/A131 and A132 in order to maximise the locational opportunities of sites along those corridors and to enhance the ability to secure further transportation benefits.
- ▶ **Option 3 - Urban Focus and Growth in Key Villages:** This option promotes a more dispersed approach to planning for new development within and/or close to the existing urban areas, but to a lesser scale than Options 1 and 2. The remaining development would be planned at the Service Settlements outside of the Green Belt that provide existing local services and facilities which includes Boreham, Danbury and Bicknacre and other locations where new development could provide new services and facilities, such as Howe Green.

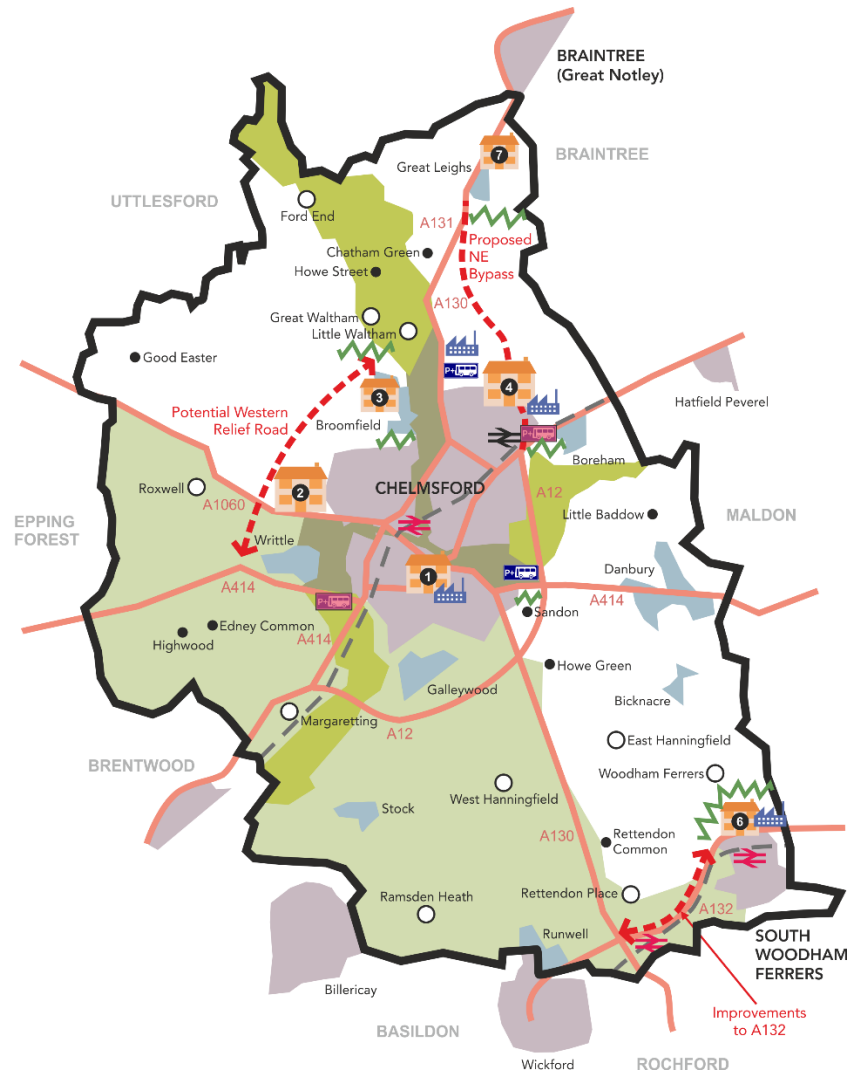
Figure NTS 2 provides an illustration of the above spatial options. Each spatial option has been appraised against the SA objectives. The findings of the appraisal are summarised in **Table NTS 5**.

Table NTS 5 Spatial Options Appraisal

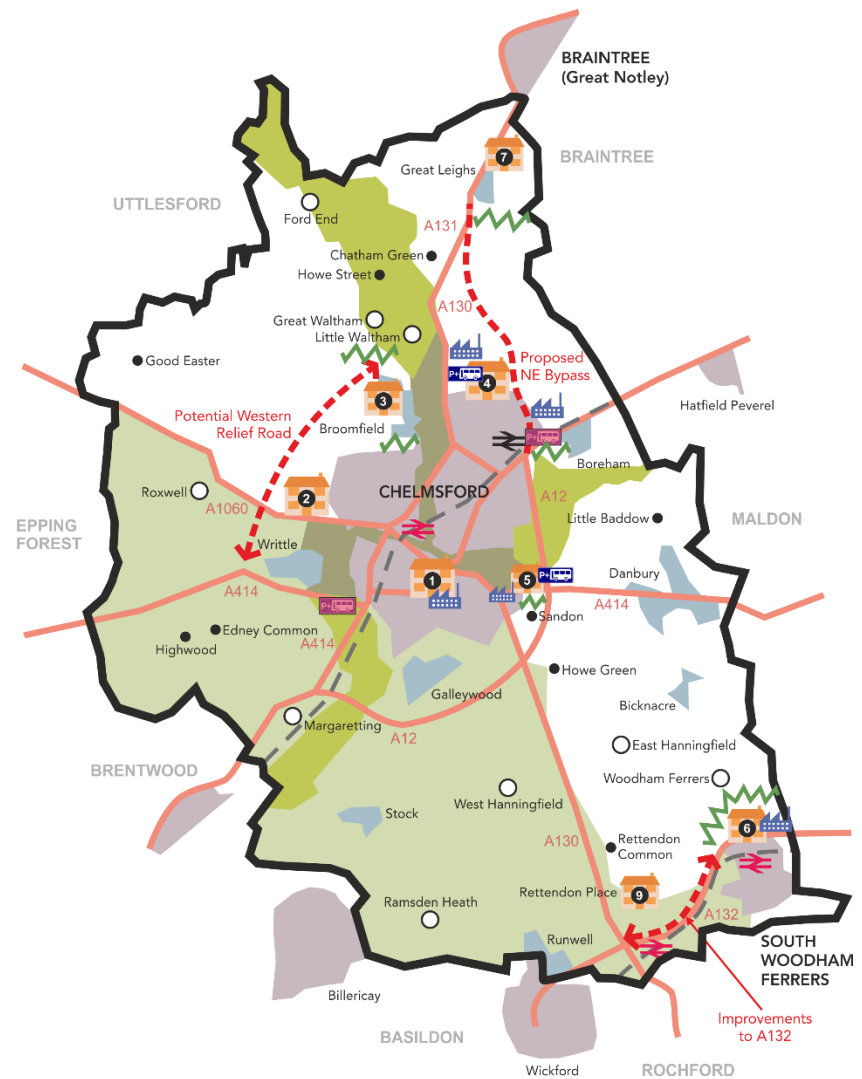
Option	1. Biodiversity	2. Housing	3. Economy	4. Urban Renaissance	5. Health and Wellbeing	6. Transport	7. Land Use	8. Water	9. Flood Risk	10. Air Quality	11. Climate Change	12. Waste and Natural Resources	13. Cultural Heritage	14. Landscape and Townscape
Option 1: Urban Focus	+/- /?	++	++	++/ -	++/ -	++/ -	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	+	~	+/- /?	+/- /?
Option 2: Urban Focus and Growth on Key Transport Corridors	+/- /?	++	++	++	++/ -	++/ -	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	+	~	+/- /?	+/- /?
Option 3: Urban Focus and Growth in Key Villages	+/- /?	++	++/ -	++/ -	++/ -	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	~	+/- /?	+/- /?

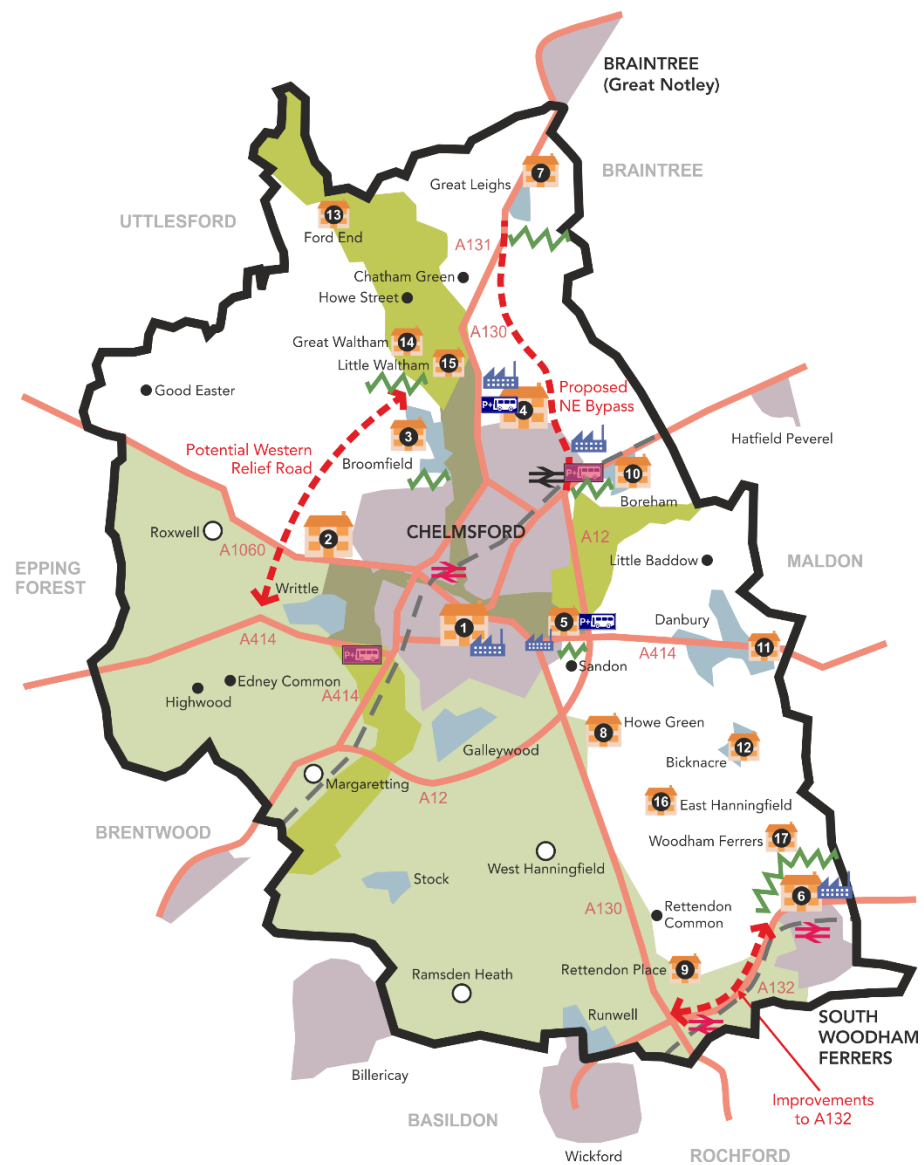
Figure NTS 2 Spatial Options

Option 1: Urban Focus



Option 2: Urban Focus and Growth on Key Transport Corridors



Option 3: Urban Focus and Growth in Key Villages

The performance of the three spatial options against the SA objectives used in the appraisal is very similar. This reflects the fact that under all three options, the majority of growth would be focused in locations adjoining the existing built-up areas of Chelmsford and South Woodham Ferrers, a spatial approach which is considered likely to help ensure that new development is accessible, supports urban renaissance, and ensures that the City continues to be a major driver of economic growth within the Heart of Essex sub-region.

Under Options 1 and 2, these benefits would be maximised and as a result, they are considered to be the best performing spatial options when assessed against the SA objectives. The implementation of Option 3, meanwhile, would result in residential development being more dispersed throughout the City Area. Whilst this would support a wider distribution of growth and benefits associated with new development, it is expected that this spatial approach would reduce positive effects associated with focusing development within and adjacent to urban areas and would be likely to increase the need to travel (as development would be delivered to settlements that do not benefit from the same accessibility to community facilities and employment opportunities as the urban areas). This option may also increase the potential for significant negative effects on the character of settlements and landscape compared to Options 1 and 2 (although this is dependent on the exact location, scale, density and design of development which is currently unknown).

Detailed matrices containing the appraisal of the spatial options are presented in Appendix H to the SA Report. The findings of these appraisals are summarised in Section 5.5 of the SA Report.

Mitigation and Enhancement

The appraisal contained in the SA Report has identified a range of measures to help address potential negative effects and enhance positive effects associated with the implementation of the options contained in the Issues and Options Consultation Document. These measures are highlighted within the detailed appraisal matrices contained at **Appendix F**, **Appendix G** and **Appendix H** to the SA Report and will be considered by the Council in refining the options and developing the policies that will comprise the Local Plan.

Next Steps

This NTS and the SA Report are being issued for consultation alongside the Issues and Options Consultation Document. The consultation will run from **8.45am on 19th November 2015 to 4.45pm on 21st January 2016**.

The findings of the SA Report, together with consultation responses and further evidence base work, will be used to help refine and select the preferred options to be taken forward as part of the Local Plan. The preferred options in addition to emerging Local Plan policies and site allocations will form the Preferred Options Consultation which is due to take place in Summer 2016. The Preferred Options Consultation Document will also be subject to further SA.

This Consultation: How to Give Us Your Views

We would welcome your views on any aspect of this NTS or the SA Report. In particular, we would like to hear your views as to whether the effects which are predicted are likely and whether there are any significant effects which have not been considered.

Please provide your comments by 4.45pm on 21 January 2016. The Council encourages people to submit comments via its consultation portal at: <http://consult.chelmsford.gov.uk/portal>.

Alternatively, comments can be sent to:

- By email – planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk
- By post - Planning Policy, Chelmsford City Council, PO Box 7544, Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1XP
- By hand – During normal opening hours to Chelmsford City Council Customer Service Centres (Duke Street, Chelmsford and Chandlers Road, South Woodham Ferrers)

A specially designed response form is available online at www.chelmsford.gov.uk/new-local-plan or on request by telephoning (01245) 606330.

