

# Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Chelmsford Draft Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Document

It is very important that the new Chelmsford Local Plan contributes to the sustainable development of Chelmsford's communities, economy and environment. To meet these requirements, and to ensure sustainability is integrated into the Local Plan, independent consultants Amec Foster Wheeler have carried out a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment screening of the Chelmsford Draft Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Document (the Preferred Options Consultation Document).

## What are Sustainable Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment?

**Sustainability Appraisal** is a process that identifies, describes and appraises the likely significant social, economic and environmental effects of the Chelmsford Local Plan. Where negative effects are identified, measures are proposed to avoid, minimise or mitigate such effects. Where any positive effects are identified, measures are considered that could enhance such effects.

**Habitats Regulations Assessment** is a process to determine whether there will be any 'likely significant effects' on any European designated nature conservation sites as a result of the Local Plan. European sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar Sites.

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment are not one-off exercises. They are ongoing and will help the Council make important decisions about how Chelmsford should change in the future.



## What is the Preferred Options Consultation Document?

The Chelmsford Local Plan will provide a new planning policy framework to meet local development needs up to 2036. Following consultation on Issues and Options between November 2015 and January 2016, Chelmsford City Council has now selected its preferred options for the Local Plan. The preferred options relate to:

- ▶ **The number of new homes to be delivered:** the Preferred Options Consultation Document makes provision for 22,162 dwellings as well as 10 permanent pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and 24 permanent plots for Travelling Showpeople.
- ▶ **The amount of employment land and jobs to be supported:** the Preferred Options Consultation Document makes provision for 55,000 sqm of employment floorspace and 13,400 sqm of retail floorspace.
- ▶ **The sites needed to deliver growth:** the Preferred Options Consultation Document directs growth to sustainable locations within the following three Growth Areas - Central and Urban Chelmsford, North Chelmsford and South and East Chelmsford.
- ▶ **The Local Plan policies:** the Preferred Options Consultation Document contains proposed planning policies to help guide future development in Chelmsford.

The Sustainability Appraisal has considered the effects of the Preferred Options Consultation Document on:

- ▶ biodiversity and geodiversity;
- ▶ housing;
- ▶ the economy, skills and employment;
- ▶ sustainable living and revitalisation;
- ▶ health and wellbeing;
- ▶ transport;
- ▶ land use and soils;
- ▶ water;
- ▶ flood risk and coastal erosion;
- ▶ air quality;
- ▶ climate change;
- ▶ waste and the use of natural resources;
- ▶ the historic environment; and
- ▶ landscape and townscape.

A Habitats Regulations Assessment screening of the Preferred Options Consultation Document has also been completed to identify the likely impacts of the Local Plan upon European sites.

























## What are the Findings?

### Sustainability Appraisal

The Sustainability Appraisal has found that the policies and proposals of the Preferred Options Consultation Document will have positive social, environmental and economic effects. These effects are expected to be particularly significant in relation to: housing; the economy; urban renaissance; health and wellbeing; and transport. This is because of the likely socio-economic benefits associated with the delivery of new housing, employment and community facilities, services and infrastructure in Chelmsford and the focus of this growth in and adjacent to Chelmsford Urban Area, to the north of South Woodham Ferrers and at Key Service Settlements outside of the Green Belt. The findings also reflect the strong framework provided by the plan policies that will help to conserve Chelmsford's natural and built environment and resources.

Negative effects have been identified in relation to: biodiversity; transport; water; flood risk; air quality; climate change; waste and resources; cultural heritage; and landscape. This is mainly due to impacts associated with the construction and operation of new development including land take, resource use, emissions to air and loss of landscape character. However, the Preferred Options Consultation Document includes policies which seek to manage these effects.

The policies and proposals of the Preferred Options Consultation Document seek to maximise the use of previously developed (brownfield) land. However, development requirements and the limited number of suitable brownfield sites that have not already been earmarked for future development mean that greenfield land adjacent to the urban areas of Chelmsford will be required. **Mixed significant positive and significant negative effects have therefore been identified in respect of land use.**

Topic	Cumulative effect of the Preferred Options Consultation Document			
	Significant Positive Effect	Minor Positive Effect	Minor Negative Effect	Significant Negative Effect
Biodiversity and Geodiversity				
Housing				
Economy, Skills and Employment				
Sustainable Living and Revitalisation				
Health and Wellbeing				
Transport				
Land Use and Soils				
Water				
Flood Risk and Coastal Erosion				
Air				
Climate Change				
Waste and Natural Resources				
Cultural Heritage				
Landscape and Townscape				

### Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

The Habitats Regulations Assessment screening exercise has highlighted that the development of the site 'North of South Woodham Ferrers' could have likely significant effects on the Crouch and Roach Estuaries SPA / Crouch and Roach Estuaries Ramsar and the Crouch and Roach component of the Essex Estuaries SAC in particular, through increased recreational pressure from future residents. Mitigation is likely to be required to prevent adverse effects occurring and which may include (for example) policy requirements for greenspace and the provision of pathways that encourage people to use areas other than the Estuary for informal recreation, particularly dog walking.

The Habitats Regulations Assessment screening exercise has also identified the potential for 'in combination' effects, particularly due to the combined amount of development regionally and associated recreational pressures. However, these effects can be addressed through normal planning and policy controls to enhance local recreational provision and avoid any significant effects.

#### What are the Next Steps?

The Sustainability Appraisal Report and Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report are being issued for consultation alongside the Preferred Options Consultation Document. **The consultation will run from 30th March to 11th May 2017.**

You can view and comment on the consultation documents at [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planningpolicyconsult](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planningpolicyconsult). You can also read the consultation documents during normal opening hours at the City Council's Customer Service Centre and in local libraries. There will also be opportunities to meet Council officers face-to-face at a series of public drop-in exhibitions to be held during the consultation period.

Comments can also be sent to:

**By email:** [planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk)

**By post:** Planning and Housing Policy,  
Chelmsford City Council, Civic Centre,  
Duke Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1XP

**By hand:** During normal opening hours to Chelmsford City Council Customer Service Centre (Duke Street, Chelmsford)

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

The findings of the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment, together with consultation responses and further evidence base work, will be used to help refine the emerging Local Plan leading to consultation on the Draft Pre-Submission Local Plan which is due to take place in September- October 2017. The Draft Pre-Submission Local Plan will also be subject to further Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment.

#### Want to Find out More?

For further information about the preparation of the Local Plan, the Preferred Options Consultation Document and the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment please visit Chelmsford City Council's website: [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/new-local-plan](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/new-local-plan).

Alternatively, please telephone: **(01245) 606330** or email: [planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@chelmsford.gov.uk).