

CC01

Chelmsford Local Plan

Response to Inspectors
Initial Questions

September 2026



Please find below Chelmsford City Council's response to the Inspectors Initial Questions set out in their letter dated 20 August 2026 (**IN01**).

Housing need

Q. What evidence has been used to justify a housing requirement figure in the plan of 1,210 dwellings per annum (dpa) given that this is lower than the Local Housing Need figure of 1,433 dpa using the Standard Method?

The Local Plan housing requirement figure of 1,210 dpa is justified by the National Planning Policy (NPPF) transitional plan-making arrangements and the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA).

The Local Plan meets the requirements for examination against the NPPF 2023 under Annex 1, paragraphs 234-235 of the NPPF December 2024 (NPPF24) which remain in force through Annex D, paragraph 8 of the NPPF August 2026 (NPPF26).

The transitional arrangements require Local Plans being examined under these arrangements to provide a minimum housing requirement of at least 80% of the revised Standard Method. The Local Plan (**SD002**) proposes a housing requirement of 1,210 new homes per annum (22,990 across the plan period). This equates to 84% of the April 2026 local housing need figure of 1,433 calculated using the latest Standard Method, enabling the Council to be examined under the NPPF26 (Housing Topic Paper **TP009**, paragraphs 4.94 - 4.100 page 26).

A higher growth option of 1,406 new dpa (26,714 across the plan period) broadly equivalent to the full standard method figure was also assessed in the IIA (**SD008**) (paragraph 6.4.9 page 176, Table 6.3 page 182, Table 6.4 page 183). This higher growth option (Option 3) assessed a higher housing figure together with additional housing site allocations. The IIA concluded that Option 3 performed more poorly overall than the submitted Local Plan (Option 2a) reflecting for example, greater resource use, strategic highway capacity constraints, and greater uncertainty with delivery (Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives (2) Housing page 190, paragraph 6.4.53 and Table 6.5 page 185). The Council therefore concluded that Option 2a with a housing figure of 1,210 dpa is a more sustainable strategy when assessed against reasonable alternatives.

The adopted Local Plan, May 2020 has a housing requirement figure of 805 net new dpa and from the base date of the adopted Local Plan (2013/2014), based on this requirement the Council has an oversupply of 463 dwellings as at 31 March 2026. For four years since 2013, housing delivery has exceeded 1,000 net new homes per annum. The latest [Housing Delivery Test 2025](#) measurement published on 17 August 2026 shows that Chelmsford exceeded the Test threshold result by 10%. The Council can therefore demonstrate that its Plan-led approach has a record of delivering new housing above the housing requirement set out in the adopted Plan.

Q. What would be the implications of using the higher of those figures?

The Council has assessed the implications of a higher figure of 1,406 dpa broadly equivalent to the full standard method figure of 1,433 dpa through the IIA (**SD008**) (paragraph 6.4.9 page 176, Table 6.3 page 182, Table 6.4 page 183). This higher growth option (Option 3) assessed a higher housing figure together with additional housing site allocations. The IIA concluded that Option 3 performed more poorly overall than the submitted Local Plan (Option 2a) reflecting for example, greater resource use, strategic highway capacity constraints, and greater uncertainty with delivery (Assessment of Reasonable Alternatives (2) Housing page 190, paragraph 6.4.53 and Table 6.5 page 185). The Council therefore concluded that Option 2a with a housing figure of 1,210 dpa is a more sustainable strategy when assessed against reasonable alternatives.

The Employment Land Review Focused Update (**ECON003**) sets out that the Council can still meet labour demand, with flexible site allocations (paragraph 4.5 page 20). The IIA (**SD008**) recommends monitoring the balance between housing and jobs provision to maintain a balance between in- and out-commuting to the City area, and consequently the aspiration for long-term sustainability in terms of a reasonable degree of self-containment (paragraph 8.8.2 – 10, page 226). The Focused Consultation Additional Sites (Regulation 19) (**SD002**) consultation incorporates additional new employment floorspace to accommodate economic growth and employment requirements to help meet the new labour supply associated with the significant increase in Chelmsford's housing requirement. Further details on this are set out in the Employment Topic Paper (**TP014**) paragraphs 4.62 to 4.70 page 26.

The Local Plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and to meet the local housing need using the Standard Method in full (1,433 net new dpa¹ or an additional 4,237 homes across the plan period following the NPPF24) would require significant delays and extra costs to the Council (and would not be supported by the current evidence base, for example highways and other modelling have tested the sites as proposed and not higher numbers). Identifying land for 4,237 additional dwellings would require additional housing site allocations. This would require major changes to the Spatial Strategy and would be likely to require starting work on the new plan-making system.

Withdrawal or delays in adopting the current plan would also have significant disadvantages for the Council and area including extending the lack of a five Year Housing Land Supply and losing the opportunity to bring forward growth in a co-ordinated manner. It would also be contrary to the Government's objective to expedite adoption of local plans as described in [Minister of State Matthew Pennycook's letter to the Planning Inspectorate](#) in October 2025.

¹ It should be noted that this increases to 1,448 if using the May 2026 figure

Strategic sites

Q. The Focused Consultation Additional Sites (Regulation 19) Document refers to the delay of key sites. What has led to the delivery of the three strategic sites being stalled or significantly delayed and which sites are they?

Three sites included within the Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) Local Plan Consultation Document (**SD001**) are subject to delivery having stalled or been significantly delayed. These sites are as follows:

- Growth Site 1w – Meadows Shopping Centre and Meadows Surface Car Park (on pages 113-119); and
- Strategic Growth Site 3c – East of Chelmsford, Land South of Maldon Road (pages 155-158); and
- Strategic Growth Site 3d – East of Chelmsford, Land North of Maldon Road (pages 158-161).

The delays are outlined in the Focused Additional Sites (Regulation 19) Document (**SD002**) (paragraph 1.4 page 5).

The following list provides more detail to explain the reasons for those delays.

Strategic Growth Site 1w – Meadows Shopping Centre and Meadows Surface Car Park

The proposed allocation was for 757 homes. The site changed ownership due to insolvency – and the planning application was withdrawn on 8 December 2025 (Ref: 24/01046/FUL and 24/01046/OUT).

The formal withdrawal decision can be viewed on Public Access via this link:
<https://planning.chelmsford.gov.uk/w2webparts/Resource/Civica/Handler.ashx/Doc/pagestream?cd=inline&pdf=true&docno=9533316>

Strategic Growth Site 3c – East of Chelmsford, Land South of Maldon Road

The proposed allocation was for 109 homes. The site changed ownership due to a company takeover (in the same ownership as site 3d below) – and the planning application was withdrawn on 31 January 2025 (Ref: 22/00916/FUL and 22/0916/OUT). The planning application covered sites 3b, 3c and 3d.

The formal withdrawal decision can be viewed on Public Access via this link:
<https://planning.chelmsford.gov.uk/w2webparts/Resource/Civica/Handler.ashx/Doc/pagestream?cd=inline&pdf=true&docno=9263709>

Formal submission of new planning applications is anticipated imminently.

Strategic Growth Site 3d – East of Chelmsford, Land North of Maldon Road

The proposed allocation was for 65 homes. The site changed ownership due to a company takeover (in the same ownership as site 3c above) – and the planning application was withdrawn on 31 January 2025 (Ref: 22/00916/FUL and 22/0916/OUT). The planning application covered sites 3b, 3c and 3d.

The formal withdrawal decision can be viewed on Public Access via this link:
<https://planning.chelmsford.gov.uk/w2webparts/Resource/Civica/Handler.ashx/Doc/pagestream?cd=inline&pdf=true&docno=9263709>

Formal submission of new planning applications is anticipated imminently.

Infrastructure

Q. What are the reasons behind the cancelling of the A12 widening scheme?

The A12 Development Consent Order (DCO) for the widening of the A12 from Chelmsford to the A120 included significant improvements to Junction 19 (Boreham Interchange). This was cancelled by Government on 8 July 2025. The full press release from the Government relating to this can be found at [Green light for over 50 road and rail upgrades supporting over 39,000 new homes and 42,000 jobs - GOV.UK](#). The scheme for the 'A12 (Chelmsford to A120) improvement' is listed here as a Strategic Road Network scheme with its funding cancelled.

The reason for the cancellation of this scheme was a Government decision following the conclusion of the Spending Review and the decision was made due to a lack of funds to support the scheme, and priority being given to other schemes in the country.

As part of the DCO cancellation announcement, the Minister of State for Transport stated that smaller scale interventions on the A12 could still be considered where they unlock growth. Further investigations are currently underway looking into potential smaller scale improvements on the corridor; this is being led by National Highways and is expected to conclude by the end of the year. Essex County Council is inputting into this process supported by Chelmsford City Council. In addition, please refer to the question regarding the Beaulieu Access Package below, which is an alternative intervention and one which National Highways are contributing to.

Q. What are the consequences for the delivery of housing sites arising from the cancellation of that scheme?

Following the cancellation of the A12 DCO, as an immediate priority an alternative A12 Junction 19 improvement scheme needed to be developed and secured to ensure delivery of housing sites in the adopted Local Plan.

An alternative scheme has now been secured to enable the delivery of the new homes within Chelmsford Garden Community (Strategic Growth Site 6). This includes upgrading both Junction 19 (Boreham Interchange) and Beaulieu Access Roundabout, the junction to the north. Collectively these schemes are known as the Beaulieu Access Package.

It is planned to be funded through a collaborative partnership consisting of Homes England (£14m), National Highways (£8m), the developers (£8m) and Essex County Council (£8m). These contributions have all been agreed in principle and the respective funding contributions are in the process of being finalised. This is being led by Essex County Council, and it is understood that this will be finalised by the time of the Hearing sessions.

Further details of this package of improvements are provided in response to the questions below.

In terms of the Local Plan submitted for examination, and the further sites identified within, further detailed traffic modelling is being undertaken by the promoters of East Chelmsford Garden Community (ECGC) (Strategic Growth Site 16a), in liaison with National Highways and Essex County Council, to establish whether additional growth proposed through the Local Plan would necessitate further mitigation at Junction 19 over and above what is already being progressed in association with the North East Chelmsford Garden Community.

Extensive modelling is being undertaken by the promoters of ECGC. National Highways will require further detailed modelling work to be undertaken at the planning application stages to identify suitable mitigation and confirm access arrangements to Strategic Growth Site 16a at Junction 19. National Highways will also require further design work to be undertaken at the junction to demonstrate that the mitigation and access arrangements are deliverable.

However, as agreed in the Statement of Common Ground with National Highways and Essex County Council (**SOCG033**) page 4, the modelling to date indicates that additional Local Plan sites would have minimal impact upon the A12 and Junctions 17, 18 and 19; and further modelling assessments with regards to these are not required for the purposes of the Local Plan.

Relevant detailed mitigation measures will be assessed at the relevant Masterplan/Planning application stages for wider sites to ensure necessary mitigation, proportionate to a development's impact, is in place so severe impacts on the strategic highway network are avoided.

Q. What are the potential timescales for the delivery of sections 1b and 2 of the Chelmsford North East Bypass?

Although there is no confirmed delivery timescale for Sections 1b and 2, as funding has not yet been secured for these sections, Essex County Council remains committed to delivery of the next phases and will continue exploring funding opportunities for the subsequent stages of the bypass, including potential future developer contributions.

A safeguarded corridor for the full Chelmsford North East Bypass continues to be included as a notation on the Policies Map.

Q. How does the delivery of sections 1b and 2 link to proposed housing delivery?

The bypass is being delivered in phases. Paragraph 3.4.2 page 24 in the Transport Impact Appraisal of Spatial Approaches December 2023 (**T001**) sets out that the Chelmsford North East Bypass has been modelled as a single-lane carriageway and only Section 1a, as shown in Figure 3-5 on page 25 of **T001**, will be constructed by 2041.

Sections 1b and 2 are not linked to or required to support any housing growth sites in the Local Plan. As such these sections have not been included in the Local Plan highways modelling.

For clarification, while paragraph 6.96 page 91 of the Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) Local Plan Consultation Document (**SD001**) refers to Sections 1b and 2, any contributions towards these sections may be linked to longer-term and/or wider growth in the future, beyond the current Local Plan Review period and are not linked to the delivery of housing growth in this Local Plan.

Q. How does the delivery of the roundabout improvements referred to in the Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package link to the delivery of housing?

The Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package scheme will transform the existing junction and provide a comprehensive package of measures to encourage increased walking, cycling, bus and Park and Ride travel to provide a long-term and sustainable solution to reduce traffic at this crucial gateway to Chelmsford.

This scheme is required to support the housing growth in the adopted Local Plan and as such Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies have been collected by Chelmsford City Council and allocated to Essex County Council to contribute towards the funding of the project.

As stated in the Essex County Council Army and Navy Sustainable Transport Package report dated 30 March 2026, available online at [FP-074-03-26 CMA](#), the total budget included in the Essex County Council capital programme for the scheme is £80.907m. comprising the following:

- DfT Major Road Network Funding - £68.753m
- Essex County Council (capital programme) - £8.154m
- Chelmsford City Council (CIL) - £4m

The DfT's £68.75million contribution is being funded from the Major Road Network (MRN) fund. This fund was created to improve the busiest and most economically important local authority "A" roads that are not part of the national Strategic Road Network (motorways and major trunk roads) but carry heavy traffic and support regional growth.

The package is included as a committed scheme within the highways modelling to support the review of the Local Plan. However, it is not linked to the delivery of any of the new housing allocations as part of this Local Plan.

Q. Will the proposed improvements at Junction 19 of the A12 set out in the Beaulieu Access Package, be sufficient to deliver the strategic growth in the Plan and achieve sustainable/active travel requirements?

The Beaulieu Access Package improvements will sufficiently support the planned growth of Chelmsford Garden Community (Strategic Growth Site 6). Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council and the Chelmsford Garden Community developers have worked closely with National Highways to develop a set of improvements at A12 Junction 19 that will satisfactorily accommodate the traffic generated by the full 6,250 home development at Strategic Growth Site 6. In addition, the package includes improvements at Beaulieu Access Roundabout which will satisfactorily accommodate the growth associated with Chelmsford Garden Community.

The Beaulieu Access Package includes:

- Junction 19 (Boreham Interchange): The Drovers Lane roundabout will be widened with an additional lane, while extra lanes will also be added for entering and exiting the roundabout. Similarly, at Generals Lane there will be additional lanes for entering and exiting the roundabout. There will also be improved pedestrian/cyclist crossings.
- Beaulieu Access Roundabout: This roundabout is the existing roundabout which provides access to the Beaulieu Park Station. The diameter of the roundabout itself will be increased with the A131 Beaulieu Parkway also being widened for a longer two-lane approach and exit plus widening of the Beaulieu Park Station Approach (east) and Station Approach connections.

In terms of sustainable and active travel requirements specifically, the package includes improvements to pedestrian and cyclist connections across Junction 19 (Boreham Interchange). The existing pedestrian crossing across the Beaulieu Parkway arm of the junction is being upgraded to a signalised shared use crossing. As part of the overall transport strategy for the area pedestrian, cycling and bus connections between Chelmsford Garden Community and Beaulieu Park station and Boreham Interchange will be delivered.

Further details of the scheme can be found on the website [Beaulieu Access Package](#).

As set out in response to the second question relating to infrastructure, National Highways and Essex County Council agree that the highways modelling to date indicates that additional Local Plan sites would have minimal impact upon the A12 and Junctions 17, 18 and 19; and further modelling assessments with regards to these are not required for the purposes of the wider strategic growth in the Local Plan.

Relevant detailed mitigation measures will be assessed at the relevant Masterplan/Planning application stages for wider Local Plan sites to ensure necessary mitigation, proportionate to a developments impact, is in place so severe impacts on the strategic highway network are avoided.

Q. Are those proposed improvements similar to those in the Development Consent Order and if not, what are the implications for the Plan?

The table below sets out a comparison of the improvements proposed by the Development Consent Order (DCO) and those to be secured through the Beaulieu Access Package (BAP).

Overall, the proposals secured through the Beaulieu Access Package result in similar improvements in the vicinity of Junction 19 required to support the development in the Local Plan to those proposed through the DCO.

Beaulieu Access Package (BAP) items	Timescale for delivery	A12 DCO Scheme items	Implications for the Local Plan
A12 Junction 19			
Traffic Capacity improvements at Generals Lane Roundabout	Spring 2029	Similar level of traffic capacity improvement at Generals Lane Roundabout to BAP scheme	BAP Scheme has similar level of performance to A12 DCO scheme at Generals Lane Roundabout.
Signalised Active Travel Crossings across A131 Beaulieu Parkway arm of Generals Lane Roundabout		Signalised Active Travel Crossings across A131 Beaulieu Parkway and A12 overbridge arms of Generals Lane Roundabout	BAP scheme does not provide the more direct active travel route from A131 Beaulieu Parkway to Drovers Way Roundabout that the A12 DCO scheme would have. However, the existing route to Drovers Way via Generals Farm Roundabout is being enhanced by the BAP scheme, through the provision of signalised crossings of the A131.
Capacity improvements at Drovers Way Roundabout		No capacity improvements at Drovers Way Roundabout	BAP scheme has more resilience at Drovers way than A12 DCO scheme, in terms of traffic capacity.
		Capacity improvements at Generals Farm Roundabout (including widened A12 overbridge)	Not required as part of BAP scheme, as traffic mitigated by BAP has minimal impact on Generals Farm Roundabout. Some developer funded improvements may be required at this junction to mitigate other Local Plan impacts should they be identified through the more detailed analysis at planning application stage.
		New active travel bridge across A12 at Paynes Lane	Less direct active travel route from Boreham village to Beaulieu Park Station and neighbouring development – although route through A12 interchange is improved with BAP scheme.

Beaulieu Access Package (BAP) items	Timescale for delivery	A12 DCO Scheme items	Implications for the Local Plan
Beaulieu Access Roundabout			
Enlargement of Roundabout	Autumn 2030	No improvement proposed to Beaulieu Access Roundabout as part of A12 DCO scheme	Safer route through junction for large vehicles (including buses) and increased traffic capacity.
Extended 2-lane approach from north (and 2-lane exit to south)			Greatly reduced delay to southbound buses and general traffic.
Extended 2-lane approach from south (and 2-lane exit to north)			Risk of traffic queuing back from Beaulieu Access Roundabout to A12 J19 (causing severe congestion) mitigated. This was not addressed by A12 DCO scheme.
Lengthened flare on eastbound approach from Beaulieu Park Railway Station			Reduced delay to buses leaving Station.

Q. Will they also be sufficient to facilitate the further development at the Chelmsford Garden Community allocation?

For the reasons set out above, the Beaulieu Access Package improvements will sufficiently support all the planned growth at the Chelmsford Garden Community. This has been agreed with National Highways and Essex County Council as relevant Highways Authorities as part of the resolutions to grant the three outline planning permissions (22/01950/OUT, 23/01751/OUT and 23/00124/OUT) that cover the entirety of the Chelmsford Garden Community allocation.