



Chelmsford Policy Board

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Chelmsford Local Plan – Preferred Options Consultation Documents

Report by:

Director of Sustainable Communities

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the Chelmsford Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Document and the Preferred Options Integrated Impact Assessment and to seek the Board's approval to publish them for public consultation for six weeks starting in May 2024.

Recommendations

1. That the Board approves the publication of the Chelmsford Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Document and the Preferred Options Integrated Impact Assessment attached at Appendices 2 and 3 of this report for public consultation in accordance with the requirements of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
2. That the Board notes the contents of the Issues and Options 'You Said, We Did' Feedback Report attached at Appendix 1 and approves it for publication.
3. To give delegated authority to the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for a Growing Chelmsford to: (i) make any necessary minor amendments to the Chelmsford Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Document, the Preferred Options Integrated Impact Assessment and the Issues and Options 'You Said, We Did' Feedback Report before publication; and (ii) prepare all necessary

documentation to support the planned programme of public consultation including publishing the 2023 – 2024 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).

4. That the Board endorses the proposed approach to the Local Plan Preferred Options consultation arrangements set out in Appendix 4.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report sets out the second formal stage in the preparation of the review of the adopted Chelmsford Local Plan and seeks the Board's approval to publish for public consultation the Local Plan Preferred Options document and accompanying Integrated Impact Assessment. The Preferred Options document contains an updated local plan vision, priorities and principles and the subsequent development allocations and planning policies to meet development needs in the period to 2041 and beyond in order to guide future development growth. It also contains the Council's proposed strategy and planning policies to help address climate change and the conservation and enhancement of the natural, historic and built environment.
- 1.2. The Local Plan is an important tool in supporting delivery of the Council's strategic priorities and for continuing to deliver an effective planning service in Chelmsford. In addition, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), requires local planning authorities to prepare and keep an up-to-date local plan. Local plans are required to be reviewed and updated within five years of their adoption.
- 1.3. Good progress is being made with implementing the current Local Plan adopted in May 2020. Most strategic growth sites allocated in the plan have a masterplan approved by the council or underway and these are guiding the preparation and consideration of subsequent planning applications for development, many of which are currently under consideration by the council.
- 1.4. The Preferred Options Consultation Document has been prepared following ongoing work over the past 18 months including engagement with key stakeholders, service providers and Duty to Cooperate bodies, further evidence base gathering, data and research and consideration of comments raised to the Issues and Options consultation. The Preferred Options Consultation Document also reflects the City Council's corporate priorities including tackling the climate and ecological emergency, addressing the local housing crisis, strengthening our economy and job creation, and improving health and wellbeing of residents.
- 1.5. The latest national planning policy and guidance has also been used to inform the Preferred Options Consultation Document including the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December 2023. Where possible, changes to the NPPF affecting plan-making have been reflected in the Preferred Options Local Plan Consultation Document including reforms to housing delivery. Other changes will be addressed at the pre-submission plan-making stage following further consideration/assessment.
- 1.6. The ongoing work has shown that although many parts of the adopted Local Plan and its policies are still sound and fit for purpose, other parts need updating because of local and national changes, updates to the evidence base or to make them more effective. This is demonstrated by monitoring and initial assessments including the Council's latest Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) published in December 2023 and assessment of the Preferred Options Local Plan against the NPPF 2023 (Local Plan Form and Content Checklist) based on a Planning Advisory Service's (PAS) Local Plan Toolkit. The preferred options plan also includes new site allocations for housing

and employment to meet growing development needs over the new plan period 2022 to 2041.

- 1.7. The responses received from consultation on the preferred options and further evidence base work will help shape the next version of the Local Plan called the Pre-Submission document. That version will be subject to a further round of consultation prior to its submission for examination to the Secretary of State. Consultation on the pre-submission document is anticipated in early 2025, in line with the Council's current adopted Local Development Scheme (LDS).

2. Issues and Options Consultation

- 2.1 The Council undertook initial public consultation on an Issues and Options document between August and October 2022. A wide range of responses were received to the consultation and were reported to this Board on 28 February 2023. A Feedback Report setting out the main issues raised in the comments was subsequently published.
- 2.2 The Feedback Report has been expanded to include a summary of how the Preferred Options plan has been informed by the Issues and Options consultation responses and updated plan evidence base. The report has been renamed to 'You Said We Did' feedback report and is provided in Appendix 1. This report will be updated further as additional evidence base reports are finalised ahead of the Preferred Options consultation including the Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

3. Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Document

- 3.1 As the Council is undertaking a plan review, the Preferred Options Consultation Document is an edited and updated version of the existing adopted Chelmsford Local Plan 2020. The consultation document is a full draft plan and presented as a 'clean' version at Appendix 2 of this report. A tracked change version will also be published as a supporting consultation document, so it is clear which parts are proposed for change. This is available to view on the Council's Local Plan Review website via the evidence base tab - [Local Plan Review 2022 \(chelmsford.gov.uk\)](https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/local-plan-review-2022).
- 3.2 Following the Issues and Options consultation, the whole adopted plan has been reviewed. However, changes have only been made to reflect for example, the previous consultation feedback, updated plan evidence base, national planning policy, new local priorities, and adopted plan monitoring data. Proposed changes include new development site allocations in addition to updated, new and deleted policies and text.
- 3.3 New policies are shown in the order they will appear in the plan and will be renumbered in the next version of the plan. The key proposals in the Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Document are described in more detail below.

Strategic Priorities, Vision and Spatial Principles

- 3.4 Chapter 3 sets out the Strategic Priorities that will be addressed through the Local Plan. There are nine Strategic Priorities which set the overall policy direction for all the strategic policies, site allocations and development management policies in the Local Plan. These include priorities for climate, growth and place.
- 3.5 The Strategic Priorities include two new priorities to bring forward action on the climate and ecological emergency, and to promote smart, active travel and sustainable transport.

- 3.6 Chapter 4 sets out the long-term Vision for the kind of place we want Chelmsford to be in 2041, as follows:

'Guiding Chelmsford's growth towards a greener, fairer and more connected community.'

- 3.7 The Vision has been reviewed to reflect the priorities within the Council's Our Chelmsford, Our Plan. It has been simplified and shortened to make it easier to use and is accompanied by supporting text to expand on the Vision, with added emphasis on sustainable and active travel, healthy living environments and economic growth.
- 3.8 Chapter 4 also contains the Spatial Principles, which guide how the Strategic Priorities and Vision will be achieved. The Spatial Principles are contained in Strategic Policy S1 and form a framework to ensure the Local Plan focuses growth in the most sustainable locations. They include considerations for location of development considering land use, climate and infrastructure. There have only been minor updates to these for clarification.

Strategic Policies and Spatial Strategy

- 3.9 Chapters 4 to 6 contain the plan's updated and new Strategic Policies which set out the Council's approach to delivering the updated Vision and Strategic Priorities discussed above. Together, the Strategic Policies comprise the overarching plan and provide the core principles which new developments are expected to meet. Most changes to the Strategic Policies reflect national policy changes, new local Council priorities and additional growth needs over the extended plan period to 2041. The policies described below contain more substantive changes.
- 3.10 Updated Strategic Policy S2 Addressing Climate Change and Flood Risk includes extra commitments for ensuring that new development responds to the challenges of the climate emergency through zero carbon developments, maximising opportunities for active and sustainable travel and, requiring new tree planting.
- 3.11 Updated Strategic Policy S4 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment incorporates additional requirements for green and blue infrastructure and nature recovery across the Council's area. New development will also be required to deliver a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (20% on Chelmsford Garden Community (Site SGS6) and East Chelmsford Garden Community (Site SGS16a)).
- 3.12 Updated Strategic Policy S6 Housing and Employment Requirements sets out the preferred development requirements over the plan period 2022-2041. This includes of total of around 19,000 new homes equating to 1,000 units per annum, 162,646sqm of new employment floorspace, between 36 and 77 Gypsy and Traveller pitches and 25 Travelling Showpeople plots. These figures have been informed by updated evidence base and data, including the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment (August 2023), Employment Land Review (December 2023) and provisional findings of the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment 2023 to 2041.
- 3.13 The 2022 Issues and Options consultation document suggested a need for around 8,000 additional new homes, over and above those allocated in the adopted plan. The most recent housing supply monitoring data from the Housing Sites Schedule (April 2023) indicates a lower residual requirement of around 3,862 new homes in the period to 2041. This takes into account updated completions, adopted Local Plan allocations, permissions, windfall projections and the same supply buffer of circa 20%. The fall in the residual requirement is primarily due to an increase in sites with planning

permission and increased capacities coming forward on adopted Local Plan allocations to 2036 most noticeably at North East Chelmsford (Chelmsford Garden Community). The total number of housing completions since 2022 added to the capacity of existing adopted Local Plan allocations, planning permissions and the windfall allowance totals 18,705 homes which is 295 homes short of the 19,000 home requirement without the circa 20% supply buffer. However, historic housing delivery evidence demonstrates the need for a supply buffer, as between 2001 and 2023 there was a shortfall of 1,312 new homes built against the relevant housing requirements even with a supply buffer of 16% in the period 2001-2013 and 18% between 2013 and 2023.

- 3.14 Following the Issues and Options Consultation Document, the Council has produced a new Employment Land Review to help identify the amount and type of employment space that needs to be provided to 2041. The new employment requirements in the preferred Spatial Strategy are informed by an employment land residual shortfall of around 108,000sqm (Scenario 3 in the review).
- 3.15 Strategic Policy S7 contains the preferred Spatial Strategy. Five initial Spatial Approaches were presented in the Issues and Options consultation. Drawing on the wider plan evidence base, national planning policy and guidance, and the Issues and Options consultation responses, three hybrid Spatial Strategy approaches/options were developed for detailed technical testing during 2023. Outputs from this testing work have been used alongside other plan evidence and national policy to inform the employment and housing site allocations included within the preferred Spatial Strategy. Information on how the evidence base outputs have informed the preferred options plan is given in the 'You Said We Did' document in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 3.16 This preferred Spatial Strategy represents an evolution of the existing Spatial Strategy in the adopted Local Plan by continuing to focus new housing and employment growth to the most sustainable locations in three Growth Areas beyond the Green Belt.

Growth Area 1 – Central and Urban Chelmsford

- 3.17 Overall, Growth Area 1 will deliver around 4,200 new homes and 9,000sqm of new employment floorspace. This new development will regenerate previously developed sites in Urban Chelmsford and help to meet Council objectives for strengthening and expanding the City as a major residential, employment and retail centre to build upon its past success.
- 3.18 Over 2,750 new homes will be provided on brownfield sites within Chelmsford Urban Area (Location 1) over the plan period, of which around 750 homes will be on new identified sites. 4,000sqm of new employment floorspace will also be delivered.
- 3.19 Around 1,400 new homes and 5,000sqm of new employment floorspace carried over from the adopted plan will be provided on sustainable new neighbourhoods on the edge of Urban Chelmsford. These sites at West of Chelmsford (Location 2) and East of Chelmsford (Location 3) will maximise opportunities for active travel (cycling and walking) into the City Centre through the Green Wedge. Development will also deliver benefits including green infrastructure and city greening, enhanced bus services, unlock access into the Sandford Mill Special Policy Area, improved Park and Ride to serve eastern road corridors into the City and improvements to the Army and Navy junction. Both the West and East of Chelmsford sites have approved masterplans with planning applications currently under consideration.

Growth Area 2 – North Chelmsford

- 3.20 The North Chelmsford Growth Area will continue to deliver a considerable amount of new development over the plan period including over 7,800 new homes and 66,000sqm of new employment floorspace. Most of this growth, around 6,250 homes, will come forward at North East Chelmsford - Chelmsford Garden Community (Location 6) rolled forward from the adopted plan, which has an approved masterplan (Development Framework Document) and outline planning applications currently under consideration. This development will be landscape-led utilising the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) Garden City principles, centred around open space/leisure facilities, new employment sites and will be underpinned by a comprehensive package of new infrastructure including new schools and early years, green infrastructure, a large country park and neighbourhood centres. The site will also expand on the attractive well-designed communities at Beaulieu and Channels and be well-connected by improved road and public transport facilities and links including the new railway station currently under construction and Chelmsford North East Bypass which is being delivered in phases. There will be a requirement for a 20% biodiversity net gain over the site.
- 3.21 Growth Area 2 also includes residential allocations for around 1,500 new homes carried forward from the adopted plan at Great Leighs (Location 7) and North of Broomfield (Location 8). These will provide opportunities to contribute towards and enhance existing facilities in these villages. The allocations at Chelmsford Garden Community and North of Broomfield will also maximise opportunities for enjoyment of the Green Wedge and use for sustainable travel into the City Centre (cycling and walking).
- 3.22 Proposed additions to the adopted Local Plan are new limited small allocations on two sites of no more than 1 hectare each at Ford End (Location 14). This will help to support and sustain existing village services such as the primary school and to maintain a diverse housing supply. New employment development will also be provided through extensions to the existing Little Boyton Hall Farm, Roxwell (Location 15) and Waltham Road employment, Boreham (Location 9a). Expansion of these well-established employment sites will provide further rural inward investment opportunities and reflect the aspirations of national policy to support the sustainable growth and expansion of business in rural areas.

Growth Area 3 – South and East Chelmsford

- 3.23 This area will see significant new growth of around 4,450 new homes and 87,000sqm of new employment floorspace over the plan period and beyond. This is in addition to a sustainable new development for the existing town of South Woodham Ferrers (Location 10) which is rolled forward from the adopted plan. The proposals at South Woodham Ferrers have an approved masterplan and a resolution to grant planning permission.
- 3.24 Around 3,000 new homes and 43,000sqm of new employment floorspace is proposed on a new garden community at East Chelmsford (Hammonds Farm – Location 16 - Site 16a) in the plan period with the site allocated capable of a further 1,500 homes in the period beyond 2041. This garden community will create a new sustainable, comprehensively planned, landscape-led development based on TCPA Garden City Principles. Its location and proximity to Chelmsford's urban area through the Green Wedge will allow opportunities for sustainable and active travel. It will deliver new and improved infrastructure to significantly increase connectivity over and under the A12

through active and sustainable travel links to key destinations including Chelmsford City Centre, Sandon (including the Park & Ride) the new Beaulieu Park Rail Station and connections to Danbury to the east. The new and improved links will help address the severance issues created by the A12. The site will have primary highway access from the A414 at the south of the site and directly from Junction 19 of the A12 to the north. Capacity improvements to the A414 and Junctions 18 and 19 of the A12 will be required. A wide range of new community services and facilities are proposed on the site including a new all-through school and new primary schools, early years and childcare nurseries, open spaces, recreation, sport and play facilities, community facilities and mixed use neighbourhood centres. The proposals include a large country park providing significantly improved public access and recreational opportunities along the Chelmer Valley river corridor and provide connections to the country park and active travel routes proposed as part of the existing development allocations at East of Chelmsford (Location 3). There will be a requirement for a 20% biodiversity net gain over the site and to reinstate lost historic landscape features. The development will further support Chelmsford's economic growth by providing significant new employment floorspace and jobs.

- 3.25 The Council's evidence base does highlight that the East Chelmsford Garden Community (Hammonds Farm) site has a moderate landscape value rating, a low to medium landscape capacity rating and overall high landscape sensitivity rating. The site has no formal landscape designation apart from the Conservation Area along the river corridor proposed to form the Country Park. On the eastern portion of the site, the A12 and 440kw National Grid powerlines have a significant impact upon the existing landscape. The allocation of a large Country Park along the river valley and protection of land to the east of Sandon Brook alongside policy requirements to reinstate historic landscape features will help mitigate the impact of the development. Landscape sensitivity and character is one of many factors to weigh-up when making a balanced decision on the location of new development. In this case, the locational and sustainability benefits due to the site's close proximity to the urban area of Chelmsford, Sandon Park and Ride, linkages to the new Beaulieu Park rail station and strategic road network together with opportunities that the site provides for active and sustainable travel, reinstatement of historic landscape features and biodiversity and the ability to create a comprehensively planned new community has informed the site's status as a preferred option.
- 3.26 A new stand-alone strategic employment site for around 43,000sqm is proposed at Land adjacent A12 Junction 18 (Location 16 - Site 16b), south of the proposed new East Chelmsford Garden Community. This will provide for a mix of employment uses including office, light industrial, general industrial and distribution uses in a sustainable location close to the strategic road network, Sandon Park and Ride with proposed links to the new rail station. The development will make an important contribution to the delivery of employment and jobs in the City Council's area over the plan-period. A new junction will be required on the A414 to access the site and active travel connectivity across Junction 18 of the A12 to the east. Capacity improvements to Junction 18 of the A12 and the A414 will be aligned with those needed for the East Chelmsford Garden Community (Hammonds Farm).
- 3.27 In addition to the above new sites, sustainable new development on two small sites of no more than 1 hectare each are identified in Bicknacre and East Hanningfield, and around 100 new homes within Danbury through the emerging Danbury Neighbourhood

Plan. These villages have primary schools, employment sites and community facilities making them suitable for more limited scale development. New housing will help to support existing village services and to maintain a diverse housing supply.

Summary of the Preferred Spatial Strategy

3.28 Overall, growth identified in the preferred Spatial Strategy (S7) will be accommodated on 35 unbuilt allocated sites rolled forward from the adopted Local Plan and 17 new proposed site allocations. These are listed in Appendix A of the Preferred Options Local Plan (given in Appendix 2 of this report). All rolled forward sites represent sustainable and sound development allocations which have been previously subject to Independent Examination. As described above, new site allocations include:

- **Previously developed sites in Chelmsford Urban Area (Location 1 - Sites 1w-1bb).**
- **A new Garden Community in East Chelmsford (Location 16 - Hammonds Farm – Site SGS16a).**
- **New stand-alone strategic employment site at Junction 18 of the A12 (Location 16 - Site SGS16b).**
- **Expansion of existing employment sites north of Roxwell at Boyton Hall Farm (Location 15 - Site SGS15) and Waltham Road, Boreham (Location 9a - Site SGS9a), and**
- **Limited small-scale residential development on sites of no more than 1 hectare in size around Bicknacre (Location 11 - Sites GS11b and c), Ford End (Location 14 - Location 16 Sites GS14a and b) and East Hanningfield (Location 17 - Sites GS17a and b).**

3.29 In addition, new Gypsy and Traveller sites are proposed on the two Garden Communities (Sites SGS6 and SGS16a). The proposed housing and employment allocations are shown indicatively on the Local Plan Key Diagram and within the reasoned justification of Strategic Policy S7.

Other new Strategic Policies

3.30 Four new Strategic Policies are proposed to strengthen the plan in line with the new and updated Strategic Priorities, to address gaps in the adopted plan, and respond to local and national changes since the current plan was adopted:

- **Strategic Policy S14 Health and Wellbeing seeks to ensure that future development proposals go further to support improvements in the health and wellbeing of residents and communities, promote more active and healthier lifestyles and reduce health inequalities.**
- **Strategic Policy S15 Creating Successful Places puts a greater emphasis in the plan on ensuring that new development will create successful new places where people want to live, work, visit and study including making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area where it is located.**
- **Strategic Policy S16 Connectivity and Travel strengthens the plan to ensure that future development proposals maximise opportunities for active and sustainable travel, facilitate a shift away from fossil fuelled powered vehicles and reduce the need for travel, and**

- **Strategic Policy S17 Future of Chelmsford City Centre seeks to ensure that new development proposals strengthen and support diversification, regeneration, improvements, and vibrancy of the City Centre.**

Site Allocations Policies

- 3.31 Chapter 7 contains updated and proposed new site allocation policies for housing and employment development. These policies set out a range of site criteria that the developments would need to adhere to including the amount and type of development and site-specific infrastructure requirements. They also indicate when the developments are likely to come forward over the plan period.
- 3.32 The adopted local plan site allocations have been updated to reflect approved site masterplans, planning applications/permissions, the April 2023 housing trajectory, and updates to the policy criteria that development proposals must adhere to. Sites in the adopted plan which are now completely built out have also been deleted from the Preferred Options plan.
- 3.33 It is important to note that the site policy requirements are in addition to more generic requirements in other relevant plan policies. This includes several new and updated policy requirements including infrastructure requirements (in S9), Health Impact Assessments (in S14), contributions towards the Essex Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (in DM16) and net zero carbon development (in DM31).
- 3.34 It should also be noted that the proposed new Garden Community in East Chelmsford (Site SGS16a - Hammonds Farm) allocates around 3,000 new homes in the period to 2041 with the proposed site allocation able to provide a further 1,500 new homes in the period beyond 2041. The timing and delivery of this further development would need to be considered as part of the next Local Plan. The total extent of the site allocated to accommodate 4,500 new homes is shown on plan 4 of the Draft Policies Map.

Development Management Policies

- 3.35 Chapters 8 and 9 of the Preferred Options Consultation Document contain updated and proposed new non-strategic policies, known as 'Development Management Policies'. These cover the following topic areas/themes:
- Securing the right type of homes.
 - Securing Economic Growth.
 - Protecting the Countryside.
 - Protecting the Historic Environment.
 - Protecting the Natural Environment.
 - Delivering and Protecting Community Facilities, and
 - Making High Quality Places.
- 3.36 In addition to the Strategic Policies, these policies apply where relevant to all site allocations and any future planning applications submitted for all forms of development. They provide detailed requirements that development proposals will be assessed against at the planning application stage.

3.37 Most of the changes to Development Management policies reflect national policy changes and were proposed in the Issues and Options Consultation Document. The following policies contain more substantive changes:

- **Policy DM1 - Size and Type of Housing**
 - **Increased Accessible and adaptable dwellings M4(2) requirements from 50% to 100% on new developments of 10 or more dwellings.**
- **Policy DM2 - Affordable Housing and Rural Exception Sites**
 - **Threshold amended from 11 to 10 dwellings to meet the definition of major development in the NPPF.**
 - **Includes first homes exception sites and community-led exceptions sites.**
- **Policy DM5 - Designated Centres**
 - **Confirms acceptable uses within the Primary Shopping Area (PSA), supporting a more diverse range of uses outside PSAs and removing primary and secondary frontages, in line with the NPPF.**
 - **Updated Use Classes to reflect changes to legislation.**
- **Policy DM16 – Protection and Promotion of Ecology, Nature and Biodiversity**
 - **Includes new requirement for new development to deliver a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (or 20% on Garden Communities).**
- **Policy DM25 - Sustainable Buildings**
 - **Includes a requirement for rainwater harvesting.**
 - **Clarification of electric vehicle charging points.**
- **In addition, there is a new policy requiring new buildings to be net zero carbon in operation (DM31).**

Monitoring Framework

3.38 Chapter 10 contains the Monitoring Framework for the Local Plan. This Section sets out in detail how the Council will monitor the Local Plan's success in meeting the challenges and opportunities set out in the Strategic Priorities (Chapter 3) to ensure that it is effective in delivering its objectives. Changes have been made to the Monitoring Framework to improve its use and reflect the new and updated policies in the Preferred Options plan.

3.39 Monitoring of the indicators set out in the table will be done on an annual basis and published through the Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR). The AMR is a document used by the Council to report on the performance of their adopted plans.

Alternative Options

3.40 Throughout the Preferred Options Consultation Document each policy includes any 'Alternatives considered'.

3.41 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) makes it clear that a Local Plan reflects sustainability objectives and has considered reasonable alternatives. The alternatives considered have been tested by the Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA), alongside the proposed policies, to help ensure that the Preferred Options plan is justified and is an appropriate strategy, when considered against the alternatives and other available and proportionate evidence.

Policies Map

- 3.42 Chapter 11 presents the Draft Policies Map for the Preferred Options Local Plan. This covers the whole of the Chelmsford area, and its purpose is to illustrate sites proposed for development or protection within the consultation document.
- 3.43 Most notations on the Draft Policies Map are defined by the Council including open spaces, Employment Areas and Settlement Boundaries. A number of evidence base studies have been used to inform new and updated notations, including a Review of the Defined Settlement and Urban Area Boundaries 2024. Other amendments have been made to reflect local and national changes and new/updated policies in the preferred options plan. These include adding:
- Proposed new housing and employment sites allocations.
 - Made (adopted) Neighbourhood Plan areas.
 - Latest flood zones published by the Environment Agency.
- 3.44 The changes also include removing:
- Built-out/completed housing site allocations from the adopted plan.
 - Retail frontages which are now obsolete in national planning policy.
 - Minerals and Waste Sites which are defined by Essex County Council in separate local plans.
- 3.45 Limited small-scale residential development around Bicknacre (Sites GS11b and c), Ford End (Sites GS14a and b) and East Hanningfield (Sites GS17a and b) are shown as a symbol on the Draft Policies Map. Further work will be undertaken to determine appropriate site boundaries in the next version of the Policies Map.
- 3.46 Due to the size of the Chelmsford administrative area the Draft Policies Map is set out on a number of insets. The Draft Policies Map is embedded within the Preferred Options Consultation Document attached at Appendix 2 of this report.

Other Proposals

- 3.47 In addition to the proposals set out above, the Preferred Options Local Plan includes:
- A foreword.
 - Details on the consultation process.
 - Updated statistics and information in the 'About Chelmsford' section.
 - Updated housing and Gypsy and Traveller accommodation trajectories to reflect the identified site-specific allocations.
 - Updated Development Standards in Appendix 1 to reflect the new and updated strategic and development management policies, and
 - A Glossary.

4. Preferred Options Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

- 4.1 There is a legal requirement to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) of Local Plan proposals, and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of impacts from proposed development on protected sites. Following good practice, the Council has taken an integrated approach to these assessments due to the similar nature of the information being assessed. The Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) brings together the SA/SEA and HRA, along with an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The IIA is attached to this report at Appendix 4.
- 4.2 The IIA is a detailed technical document, which assesses the Preferred Options Local Plan proposals and policies against a set of assessment objectives to identify any significant effects and recommend measures to mitigate these effects and enhance the positive effects. The document will form part of the Preferred Options consultation, and will be accompanied for consultation by a non-technical summary of the key findings (currently prefacing the report). Some of these key findings are as follows:
- 4.3 SA/SEA - The Strategic Priorities in the Preferred Options Consultation Document are broadly compatible with the IIA Assessment Objectives with very few incompatibilities.
- 4.4 The Strategic Policies in the Preferred Options Consultation Document are assessed as being broadly positive in delivering the Local Plan's Spatial Principles, in particular health and wellbeing, place creation, infrastructure provision, climate change and protection of the countryside. The Spatial Strategy (Strategic Policy S7) is a hybrid approach drawing on elements of the five approaches presented in the Issues and Options consultation. The preferred Spatial Strategy is considered to perform better than the five alternative approaches, and will focus new housing and employment growth to the most sustainable locations when considered against:
- National planning policy
 - Analysis of Issues and Options responses.
 - Issues and Options IIA Report
 - Local Plan Vision and Spatial Principles
 - Settlement Hierarchy
 - Environmental constraints
 - Availability/viability of land, and
 - Discussions with key stakeholders.
- 4.5 For both Strategic Priorities and Strategic Policies, any conflicts or negative impacts relate to resource issues, land take, and greenhouse emissions. However, it is considered that significant adverse effects will be largely avoided and/or mitigated through the detailed development requirements set out within the policies covering: Growth Sites, Strategic Growth Sites, Special Policy Areas and Development Management.
- 4.6 HRA - There are either no likely significant effects or no adverse effects on the integrity of any Habitats Sites, alone or in combination. This is principally due to either the absence of effect pathways or the mitigation measures previously agreed with Natural England that are being carried forward from the adopted Local Plan.

- 4.7 EqIA - It is considered that the Preferred Options Consultation Document is compatible with the duties of the Equality Act 2010, with positive effects identified for Protected Groups particularly in relation to provision of community services, accessible green space, improved air quality, meeting spaces and a range of housing types.
- 4.8 HIA - Strategic policies will help to support and progress the HIA objectives, particularly new Strategic Policy S14 (Health and Wellbeing).
- 4.9 The IIA will be further reviewed in light of the consultation responses received, which will be used to inform the next Local Plan stage, and published alongside it.

5. Other Key Evidence Base

- 5.1. Alongside the IIA, the Preferred Options Local Plan is informed by a wide range of evidence base documents. These include a Viability Assessment, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment, Heritage Assessments, Water Cycle Scoping Study, and Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Outputs from further evidence base work will be used to inform the pre-submission plan including a Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Open Space Assessment and Detailed Water Cycle Study.
- 5.2. All evidence base used to inform the Preferred Options plan will be published online for the start of the public consultation. The 'You Said We Did' report in Appendix 1 provides more information on the plan evidence base work and how it has been used to inform the Preferred Options Consultation Document.
- 5.3. The Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) 2023 – 2024 provides a technical site assessment to help guide the Council on site allocations. It assesses new and amended sites that were not incorporated in the SHELAA 2022 -2023 assessment, using the same criteria and methodology consulted on and adopted in the 2022 - 2023 assessment, with one minor clarification in the methodology and criteria note to confirm that the desktop assessment of the suitability, availability, and achievability of each promoted site in the 2023 assessment uses the administrative area of Chelmsford City Council only.
- 5.4. The SHELAA 2023 - 2024 will be published alongside the Preferred Options Consultation Document with the approval of the Director of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for A Growing Chelmsford.
- 5.5. The call for sites process remains live all year round to provide flexibility to site promoters. The next cut off point for assessment will align with the close of the consultation on the Preferred Options Consultation Document to enable new and amended sites submitted between the 1 January 2024 and the close of the Preferred Options Consultation Document, to be assessed with all previously submitted sites against the proposed changes in the Preferred Options Consultation Document. As previously, any methodological and criteria changes to the SHELAA assessment process will be identified and reported as part of the production of the assessment. This 2023 – 2024 SHELAA will then inform the Pre-Submission Consultation Document.

6. Preferred Options Consultation

- 6.1. The Council is now in a position where it can publish a Preferred Options Consultation Document and Preferred Options IIA for formal public consultation under Regulation 18 of the Development Plan Regulations 2012. This represents the second stage in the preparation of a review of the adopted Local Plan, and although at this stage it will be of limited weight in Development Management decision making, it indicates the Council's intent to address future growth requirements in Chelmsford in the period to 2041 and beyond in a planned and sustainable way.
- 6.2. The purpose of the consultation is to consult and engage with the community and interested parties regarding the Council's preferred options for site allocations and planning policies to meet the identified growth requirements and the evidence base that supports them.
- 6.3. It is important to note that at this stage the local plan is still evolving, and no decisions are fixed. The Council will continue to gather and utilise the plan evidence base and engage with infrastructure providers and Duty to Cooperate bodies on the plan. It will also consider the responses to the preferred options consultation. Together these outputs will influence the next version of the plan. Therefore, the Preferred Options Consultation Document is not necessarily what the final new plan will comprise.
- 6.4. It is proposed to consult on the Preferred Options Local Plan and Preferred Options IIA for the statutory six-week period during May and June 2024. The consultation will commence after the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner election as before would not be appropriate within the statutory pre-election period.
- 6.5. The consultation will go beyond the minimum requirements of legislation and the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). A range of effective communication tools and channels are proposed to be used to promote and engage as many people and organisations as possible. Promotional activities will include email/letter notifications to all those on the Council's Local Plan database, providing information on the Council's website, press releases, adverts in local publications, posters, site notices and social media. Consultation activities will include placing consultation documents on deposit at the Council's Customer Service Centre, organised stakeholder presentations, Duty to Co-operate meetings, a virtual exhibition and staffed physical exhibitions. Officers are working closely with the Council's Communications Team on its engagement approach and activities.
- 6.6. The Council will also publish several documents to support the consultation, including a tracked change copy of the adopted Local Plan to show where changes are proposed, non-technical summary leaflets, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Topic Papers. Further detail on the planned programme of consultation is set out in the Preferred Options Consultation Plan at Appendix 4 to this report. It is currently intended that the results of the forthcoming public consultation will be reported to a meeting of this Board in Autumn 2024.
- 6.7. Following this second consultation, the next stage will be to review the comments received and together with evidence, prepare a final local plan (Pre-Submission document). This will be subject to a further round of consultation in early 2025 (under Regulation 19 of the Local Plans Regulations).

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. Work on the preparation of the review of the Chelmsford Local Plan to cover the period up to 2041 has reached the stage where the Council can embark on the second formal round of public consultation. Officers intend to ensure that the consultation is widely publicised, and that it is supported by exhibitions and accessible consultation material to encourage a wide response from the public and stakeholders.

List of Appendices:

- Appendix 1** – Issues and Options ‘You Said, We Did’ Feedback Report
Appendix 2 – Chelmsford Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Document
Appendix 3 – Chelmsford Local Plan Preferred Options Integrated Impact Assessment
Appendix 4 – Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Plan

Background Papers:

Chelmsford Policy Board on 14 July 2022, agenda Item 6 Review of Adopted Local Plan – Issues and Options Consultation

Chelmsford Policy Board on 28 February 2023, agenda Item 5 Review of Adopted Local Plan – Issues and Options Consultation Feedback

[Chelmsford City Council Adopted Local Plan](#)

[National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023](#)

[Ministerial Statement - Planning - Local Energy Efficiency Standards Update 13 December 2023](#)

[Planning practice guidance](#)

[Statement of Community Involvement, September 2020](#)

Local Development Scheme, November 2023 - available here [Local Plan Review 2022 \(chelmsford.gov.uk\)](#)

Chelmsford Local Plan Preferred Options Tracked Changes Version, March 2024 – available via evidence base tab here [Local Plan Review 2022 \(chelmsford.gov.uk\)](#)

Preferred Options evidence base reports – available via evidence base tab here [Local Plan Review 2022 \(chelmsford.gov.uk\)](#)

Preferred Options Local Plan Form and Content Checklist, March 2024 – available via evidence base tab here [Local Plan Review 2022 \(chelmsford.gov.uk\)](#)

[Authority Monitoring Report, December 2023](#) Authority Monitoring Report, December 2023

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional:

There is a need to ensure the Review of the Local Plan accords with the latest legislative requirements.

Financial:

There are no cost implications arising directly from this report. The Local Plan is being prepared using the existing agreed budget.

Potential Impact on Climate Change and the Environment:

The review of the adopted Local Plan will seek to ensure new development within the administration area will contribute towards meeting the Council’s Climate Change agenda.

Contribution toward Achieving a Net Zero Carbon Position by 2030:

The review of the adopted Local Plan will seek to ensure new development within the administration area will contribute towards achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030.

Personnel:

There are no personnel issues arising directly from this report.

Risk Management:

There are several risk considerations associated with local plan production. These are set out in the Local Development Scheme 2023 with contingency measures.

Equality and Diversity:

The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the council when it makes decisions. An Equalities and Diversity Impact Assessment forms part of the Integrated Impact Assessment for the review of the Local Plan and concludes that it will not have a disproportionate adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic and in general will have positive or neutral impacts across a wide range of people and will be compatible with the duties of the Equality Act 2010.

Health and Safety:

There are no Health & Safety issues arising directly from this report.

Digital:

There are no digital issues arising directly from this report.

Other:

The Review of the Local Plan will seek to contribute to priorities in the Council's Our Chelmsford, Our Plan 2020: A Fairer and Inclusive Chelmsford, A Safer and Greener Place, Healthy, Enjoyable and Active Lives and A Better Connected Chelmsford.

Consultees:

CCC – Development Management
CCC – Economic Development and Implementation
CCC – Legal Services
CCC – Communications
CCC – Spatial Planning
ECC – Spatial Planning

Relevant Policies and Strategies:

The report takes account of the following policies and strategies of the City Council:

Adopted Local Plan 2013-2036 and supporting Supplementary Planning Documents and Planning Advice Notes
Our Chelmsford, Our Plan (2020)
Statement of Community Involvement (2020)
Health and Wellbeing Plan (2019)
Public Open Spaces Policy (2022)
Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan (2020)
Housing Strategy 2022-27 (2022)
Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-24 (2020)
Cultural Strategy (2023)
Plan for Improving Rivers and Waterways (2022)
Chelmsford Green Infrastructure Strategic Plan 2018-2036

Essex Coast Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy 2018-2038
Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan (2020)
Duty to Co-operate Strategy (2022)

Our Chelmsford, Our Plan

The above report relates to the following priorities in the Corporate Plan:

Promoting sustainable and environmentally responsible growth to stimulate a vibrant, balanced economy, a fairer society and provide more housing of all types.

Making Chelmsford a more attractive place, promoting Chelmsford's green credentials, ensuring communities are safe and creating a distinctive sense of place.

Encouraging people to live well, promoting healthy, active lifestyles and reducing social isolation, making Chelmsford a more enjoyable place in which to live, work and play.

Bringing people together, empowering local people and working in partnership to build community capacity, stronger communities and secure investment in the city.