

Chelmsford Local Plan

Review of the adopted Local Plan

Preferred Options

Topic Paper:

Spatial Strategy and Strategic Sites

May 2024

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This Topic Paper is one of a number produced by Chelmsford City Council to set out how the review of the Local Plan has been developed. Topic papers will be refreshed and updated at each stage of the Local Plan Review process to ensure the latest information/position is available. Unlike some other Topic Papers, there was not an Issues and Options version, so this covers the activity which has taken place at both Issues and Options and Preferred Options stages.
- 1.2. The intention of the topic papers is to provide background information; they do not contain any policies, proposals or site allocations. Topic papers will form part of the Local Plan evidence base which will be submitted alongside the Local Plan for independent examination.
- 1.3. The Topic Paper provides background information and provides context of how the Local Plan has been formulated. This Topic Paper should be read alongside the other preferred Options Topic Papers (available at www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review), in particular:
 - **Housing** – covers how housing matters have been considered when preparing the review of the adopted Local Plan and how the Review will seek to provide sustainable patterns of development through a Spatial Strategy that meets the need for new homes
 - **Employment** – covers how employment matters and requirements have been considered when preparing the Review of the Adopted Local Plan
 - **Infrastructure** – covers infrastructure needs to support the Local Plan and how requirements and delivery of various pieces of infrastructure will be provided for in the Review of the Adopted Local Plan.

This paper covers the following areas:

- Development needs and reasonable alternatives
 - Land supply, constraints and opportunities
 - Strategic Priorities, Vision and Spatial Principles
 - Spatial Strategy, Strategic Growth and Growth Sites, and reasonable alternatives.
- 1.4. The main issues covered by this Topic Paper are:

Strategic Priority 1 – Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency; and Strategic Policy S2 – Addressing climate change and flood risk

- Through the location of development allocations particularly in encouraging sustainable and active travel and minimising flood risk

Strategic Priority 2 – Protecting and enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment, and support an increase in biodiversity and ecological networks; and Strategic Policy S4 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment; and Strategic Policy S4 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- Through locating development to protect and enhance environmental and heritage assets, and minimise the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land
- Protecting the important river valleys which have help shaped development growth and promote recreation, nature networks and active travel through locally designated Green Wedges.

Strategic Priority 4 – Ensuring sustainable patterns of development and protecting the Green Belt; and

Strategic Policy S11 – The role of the countryside

- Through promoting the use of previously developed land, accommodating a portion of the housing requirement on small sites of 1ha or less, and focusing development at settlements outside the Green Belt.
Protecting the openness and permanence of the Green Belt and promote its role in preventing urban sprawl and the coalescence of settlements.

**Strategic Priority 5 – Meeting the needs for new homes; and
Strategic Policy S6 – Housing and employment requirements**

- Through ensuring the site allocations deliver the identified housing and employment needs for the period to 2041.

**Strategic Priority 6 – Fostering growth and investment and providing new jobs; and
Strategic Policy S8 – Delivering economic growth**

- Through ensuring site allocations can deliver the identified employment needs for the period to 2041.

Strategic Priority 8 – Delivering new and improved strategic and local infrastructure; and

Strategic Policy S9 – Infrastructure requirements; and

Strategic Policy S10 – Securing Infrastructure and impact mitigation

- Through locating development to use existing infrastructure and bring forward new provision to support development proposals.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council has developed a Spatial Strategy that seeks to meet development needs in line with Government policy and meet the Vision, Spatial Priorities and Strategic Objectives of the Preferred Options Local Plan. Overall, the Preferred Options Local Plan proposes to deliver significant new housing and employment growth alongside new community facilities and supporting infrastructure in particular through the strategic site allocations. In addition, the Preferred Options Local Plan proposes to safeguard the area's environment and valued landscapes, and ensure new development is well designed and adapts to climate change.
- 2.2. The Preferred Spatial Strategy continues the principles established in the adopted Local Plan by providing a sustainable approach to development in Chelmsford's area. It has been tested, and is supported by an updated plan evidence base.

3. Preferred Options

National Policy context and guidance

- 3.1. All policies in the Local Plan must be positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) sets out the overarching planning policy framework, supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 3.2. The adopted Local Plan was examined under the 2012 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). There have subsequently been updates to the NPPF and the Preferred Options Local Plan has been considered against the requirements of more recent national planning policy and guidance including the 2023 NPPF. Where possible, changes to the NPPF affecting plan-making have been reflected in the Preferred Options Local Plan.
- 3.3. Further detail on these key changes for consideration are set out in Table 1 under the section NPPF 2023 Checklist.
- 3.4. Relevant policies of the NPPF have informed the Spatial Strategy including:
 - Identifying a sufficient supply and mix of sites for homes (paragraph 69)
 - Enabling the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas (paragraph 88)
 - Focusing significant development on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes (paragraph 109)
 - Protecting Green Belt land (Section 13).
- 3.5. The NPPF is supported by a series of Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) on a range of subjects. The most significant PPG documents relating to the Spatial Strategy are:

[Plan-making \(October 2021\)](#)

- Covers plan-making including sustainability appraisal, evidence required across a number of topics, planning for large scale developments, and duty to co-operate matters

[Housing Supply and Delivery \(February 2024\)](#); and

[Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment \(July 2019\)](#)

- Sets out guidance on identifying sites, development potential and consideration factors, type of development, anticipated delivery trajectory, and how this provides evidence for a 5-year housing supply

[Flood risk and coastal change \(August 2022\)](#)

- Includes how to take flood risk into account when preparing local plans

[Neighbourhood Planning \(September 2020\)](#)

- Tools for communities to shape growth and development of their area; includes setting a housing requirement figure for designated Neighbourhood Plan areas.

Local Policy

Current Policy

- 3.6. The adopted Spatial Strategy (Strategic Policy S7) sets out the scale and distribution of development across Chelmsford in the plan period to 2036. The Spatial Strategy is based on evidence including national planning policy, the Strategic Priorities, Vision and Spatial Principles, environmental constraints and availability and viability of land for development.
- 3.7. Strategic Policy S7 focuses housing and employment growth to the most sustainable locations by making the best use of previously developed land in Chelmsford Urban Area; sustainable urban extensions around Chelmsford and South Woodham Ferrers; and development around Key Services Settlements outside the Green Belt.
- 3.8. The adopted policy sets out a need for 10,779 new homes, 10 Traveller Pitches, 24 Travelling Showpeople Plots, 55,000sqm of office/business space, and 13,400sqm of food retail to 2036. These were allocated in three Growth Areas across 41 sites.

Duty to Co-operate

- 3.9. The Council is committed to co-operating with other bodies on strategic planning matters. The [Duty to Co-operate Strategy](#) sets out who we will seek to co-operate with, when we will co-operate and what co-operation mechanisms we will put in place. The Strategy was reviewed in 2021 ahead of the review of the adopted Local Plan to ensure it was still relevant and covered the key strategic matters.
- 3.10. The Council will make every effort to seek co-operation on cross-boundary and strategic planning matters in a focused, positive and structured way. We will continue to discuss the Review of the Adopted Local Plan with neighbouring planning authorities and the prescribed bodies at stages which align with and inform the stages of the Review of the Adopted Local Plan. These discussions will help to determine the quantum and distribution of Chelmsford's future growth, which will be supported by updated evidence.
- 3.11. At the same time, we continue to work constructively with nearby planning authorities on their own local plan preparation. Early engagement and demonstrating co-operation both with neighbours and the prescribed bodies through Statements of Common Ground are key to meeting the legal duty to co-operate.
- 3.12. In some cases, discussion on strategic matters continue through existing joint working arrangements. We will also arrange further joint Officer and Member meetings, technical stakeholder meetings, focused workshops, and prepare Statements of Common Ground.
- 3.13. The strategic matters for the Review of the Adopted Local Plan are identified as follows:
 - Delivering homes for all including Gypsy and Traveller accommodation
 - Jobs and economy including green employment and regeneration

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

3.14. Details of ongoing activity are contained in the Duty to Co-operate Statement, published as an interim report to accompany the Preferred Options consultation and available at www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review.

3.15. Discussions with Essex County Council (ECC) as Education Authority and as Highways and Transportation Authority have influenced the choice of locations for new development, e.g. in respect of the ability of a site under consideration to meet adequate education provision, or in relation to impact on the highway network. Work with ECC as Minerals and Waste Authority has influenced the phasing of sites forming the North East Chelmsford Garden Community. The Spatial Strategy has also been discussed with bus and health contacts to inform their own future planning processes.

3.16. As part of the Preferred Options consultation we will also be having meetings with neighbouring Local Planning Authorities as well as other relevant Duty to Co-operate bodies. Any strategic cross boundary issues relating to the Spatial Strategy raised through these meetings and the consultation will be further considered and any further engagement undertaken if required.

Integrated Impact Assessment

3.17. The Council is carrying out an ongoing Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) as the Review of the Local Plan develops.

3.18. The IIA is assessing the following aspects of sustainable development:

- Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)
- Health Impact Assessment (HIA)
- Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

3.19. The SA, SEA and HRA are a requirement of national policy. The HIA and EqIA are voluntary, but the Council believes they will help to provide a complete picture of the sustainability of the Review of the Adopted Local Plan.

SA/SEA

3.20. The IIA identifies the key sustainability issues for the Review of the Local Plan, which feed into a framework against which proposals are assessed. It covers the potential environmental, social, economic and health performance of the Local Plan and any reasonable alternatives. It will be used at each stage of the Review, and be subject to separate consultation, as follows:

1. Scoping Report
2. Issues and Options
3. Preferred Options – Current Stage
4. Submission
5. Adoption

3.21. The key sustainability issues and Appraisal Framework Objectives relating to this Topic Paper are:

Key sustainability issue	Appraisal Framework Objective
Population and community	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.
Land use, geology and soils	7. Land Use and Soils: To encourage the efficient use of land and conserve and enhance soils.
Water	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.
Climate change	11. Climate Change: To minimise greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the effects of climate change.
Cultural heritage	13. Cultural Heritage: To conserve and enhance the historic environment, cultural heritage, character and setting.
Landscape and townscape	14. Landscape and Townscape: To conserve and enhance landscape character and townscapes.

3.22. The Preferred Options IIA report identifies a range of effects on the key parts of the Local Plan, as follows.

Development needs

3.23. Housing: the approach would meet in full, and exceed, the assessed housing requirement for the Chelmsford City Area over the plan period. This is in accordance with the objective of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to significantly boost housing supply.

3.24. The negative (and uncertain) effects identified across a range of the IIA Objectives reflects the potential for housing growth to result in adverse environmental impacts. These potential effects will require further consideration in the identification of site allocations and development of policies for the Local Plan and in this regard, there is the potential for new housing to deliver benefits in respect of, for example, sustainable travel, health and enhancements to townscapes.

3.25. Economy: the approach would help to stimulate economic growth through the provision of a workforce as well as consumers. Development proposals are typically careful to ensure homes, jobs and infrastructure are delivered in a co-ordinated fashion to help limit excess in- or out-commuting and ensure a degree of self-containment.

3.26. No significant negative effects on the IIA Objectives were identified. The remaining negative (and uncertain) effects identified across a range of the IIA Objectives reflect the potential for economic development to result in adverse environmental impacts. These potential effects will require further consideration in the development of policies for the Local Plan and will require particular attention in the identification of site location, design and mitigation measures. There is the potential for new employment uses to deliver benefits in respect of, for example, sustainable travel, health and enhancements to townscapes. greenfield land will be required.

Strategic Priorities, Vision and Spatial Principles

3.27. Strategic Priorities and Vision: Interactions between Strategic Priorities/Vision and the IIA Objectives are predominantly compatible or neutral in character.

3.28. Uncertainties are principally associated with meeting the need for new homes, economic development and infrastructure provision, reflecting the sustainability performance of development being dependent upon its scale, location, design and proposed mitigation measures.

3.29. Potential incompatibilities exist between housing and economic development and environmental protection and enhancement, reflecting the frequent need for compromises to be made between development and environmental interests.

3.30. Similarly, potential incompatibilities were reported between land use and delivering homes and investment; air quality and climate change, and delivering infrastructure; and waste and resources, townscape and landscape, and the delivery of new homes.

- 3.31. Where possible incompatibilities or uncertainties have been identified, these stand a greater chance of being resolved if development takes place in accordance with all the Strategic Priorities. As such, an incompatibility or uncertainty is not necessarily irreconcilable or insurmountable but one that may need to be considered in the development of policies that comprise the Local Plan.
- 3.32. Spatial Principles: Significant positive effects are anticipated for a number of IIA Objectives including biodiversity and geodiversity, improving the health and wellbeing of current and future residents, transport, flood risk, air quality, climate change, cultural heritage, and landscape and townscape, and minor positive for sustainable living and revitalisation.
- 3.33. A mixture of minor positive and minor negative effects are anticipated for housing and economy, skills and employment in with potential incompatibilities in accommodating growth to take account of Green Belt, landscape, historic, and flood risk requirements, and for land use and soils with uncertainties relating to development on high quality agricultural land.

Spatial Strategy, Strategic Growth and Growth Sites, and reasonable alternatives

- 3.34. The Preferred Spatial Strategy is capable of delivering housing and employment land requirements over the plan period, resulting in positive sustainability effects. There is the potential for new development to deliver significant positive effects in respect of housing, economy, sustainable living, transport, and health and wellbeing. There are mixed positive and negative effects in respect of biodiversity, cultural heritage, flood risk, land use and resource use, with potential uncertainty in respect of air quality and climate change. Water resource use is an issue in some locations, reflecting regional local supply deficits.
- 3.35. The uncertainties and negative effects recorded emphasise the importance of the monitoring of the performance of sustainability indicators to help implement mitigation measures which would help improve the performance of all approaches, notably in respect of air quality, biodiversity, climate change and health and well-being. In addition, small allocations in Key Service and Service Settlements will help to support the villages' services and facilities.
- 3.36. For individual Strategic Growth Sites and Growth Sites proposed for allocation, detailed assessment tables are included in the Preferred Options IIA report in Section 5, and Appendix G.
- 3.37. Sustainability effects are mixed but with many significant positive effects, and are summarised across the three Growth Areas as follows.
- 3.38. Growth Area 1 – Central and Urban Chelmsford: Significant positive effects on housing, employment, urban renaissance, and land use for brownfield site allocations. Strategic greenfield sites may have an overall significant negative effect on land use, and waste and resources due to minerals considerations.
- 3.39. Growth Area 2 – North Chelmsford: Significant positive effects on housing, employment, and sustainable living. Strategic greenfield sites may have an overall significant negative effect on land use, water, and waste and resources due to minerals considerations.

3.40. Growth Area 3 – South and East Chelmsford: Significant positive effects on housing, and sustainable living. Strategic greenfield sites may have an overall significant negative effect on land use, biodiversity, water, and waste and resources due to minerals considerations.

3.41. It is noted in the Preferred Options IIA that proposed policies in the Preferred Options document seek to minimise the identified adverse effects, which is expected to help reduce the potential for significant adverse effects.

3.42. Reasonable alternatives and the reasons for rejecting them are covered in the Preferred Options IIA report in Section 5, and further detail is provided from Paragraph 4.40 below.

Recommendations and Council response

3.43. Section 5 of the Preferred Options IIA includes recommendations which will be considered as part of further refinement of the Plan before Submission. These do not relate specifically to the Spatial Strategy or Strategic Sites.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

3.44. Appendix L of the IIA report provides guidance on the HRA-related issues that will be relevant to both the plan development and the HRA. It includes:

- an outline of the proposed approach and scope of the Local Plan HRA
- a summary of the environmental and European site baseline, as currently understood, and any known data gaps or environmental aspects subject to future studies
- informal guidance for the Council on any HRA-related issues or risks that may be relevant to the Options selection process, and/or which may need to be considered when reviewing the Local Plan.

3.45. The HRA concludes that the preferred approach will not create fundamental systematic effects that cannot be avoided or mitigated irrespective of how the objectives and options are defined through allocation and policy. The data will be reviewed and updated as the Local Plan review evolves.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

3.46. Appendix I of the IIA contains an EqIA. It includes the following conclusions:

- The Strategic Policies do not directly affect a number of the protected characteristics considered under the EqIA, reflecting the intention and scope of the plan as a land use document
- All of the Strategic Policies and Site Allocations are assessed as having either a positive, mixed or neutral outcome in respect of the protected characteristics; consequently, the Preferred Options Local Plan document is considered to be generally compatible with the duties of the Equality Act 2010.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

3.47. Appendix J of the IIA contains a HIA. It includes the following conclusions:

- Overall, the strategic policies will help to support and progress the HIA objectives by improving access to new homes, employment opportunities and associated infrastructure
- The delivery of strategic scale infrastructure will significantly progress the HIA objectives through improved access to good quality homes (including affordable homes), employment opportunities, community facilities (including education and health services) and greater opportunities for active travel
- The development management policies often relate to a specific issue and therefore progress a particular HIA objective. In general, the majority of them are not likely to progress or hinder the HIA objectives given the nature of the policies.

Evidence base

3.48. In accordance with the requirements of the NPPF (Para 31), policies and their requirements should be based on up-to-date evidence.

3.49. In addition to the IIA, the following documents are of particular relevance to the Spatial Strategy and are supporting the Review of the adopted Local Plan. Evidence base documents are available at www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review:

Document	Summary	Status
CC001: Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024 Level 1	A comprehensive study of flood risk issues from fluvial (rivers), sea (coastal) and surface water sources.	Published
Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), April 2024	The Level 2 assessment builds on identified risks from the Level 1 assessment for proposed development sites, to provide a greater understanding of fluvial, surface water, groundwater, and reservoir related flooding risks to the site. From this, CCC and developers can make more informed decisions and pursue development in an effective and efficient manner. The Level 2 assessment also identifies sites for further risk analysis at the site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) stage.	Published
Site Allocations Sequential and Exception Tests	Using the Level 1 and 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment the document	Published

	tests sites allocated for development in areas at risk of flooding (flood zones 2 and 3) and considers whether they are suitable for the proposed development.	
CC002: Water Cycle Study; Scoping and Stage 2 2024	Baseline conditions and technical testing of spatial approaches in terms of water resources, infrastructure, and environment.	Published
OSP003: Preferred Options Local Plan Form and Contents Checklist 2024	Compares the PO Local Plan against key requirements of the NPPF	Published
PL002: Parish Audit Update 2024	Assessment of key services, facilities and accessibility across villages/parishes in the City Council's area	Published
PL003: Urban Area and Defined Settlement Boundary Review 2024	Review of the extent of built-up areas used to contain settlements and determine where specific planning policies apply	Published
AH002: Housing Capacity in Chelmsford City Centre and Urban Area 2024	Provides an assessment of capacity for residential development including the status of current and proposed allocations	Published
T002: Transport Impact of Preferred Spatial Approach 2024	Modelling methodology and findings of traffic impact of the spatial approach, specifically additional development	Published

Issues and Options Consultation Feedback

3.50. The Review of the Local Plan Issues and Options document was published for consultation between August and October 2022. A total of 1,178 responses were received from 711 respondents. The 'You Said We Did' (YSWD) Feedback Report (available via chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review) sets out the main issues raised in the representations received, a summary of how the Preferred Options Local Plan has been informed by the comments and the plan evidence base. Main issues raised in the consultation responses include:

- Overall support for the draft Strategic Priorities as they are stronger, clearer and better focused; detailed comments made on a number of matters
- Support for the revised Vision; some additional wording suggested
- Good level of general support regarding their context, but suggestions that they should be directly measurable, more precise and have less ambiguous wording
- Growth in urban areas is supported as a sustainable approach
- Some land promoters urge a review of the Green Belt

- Expanding allocated sites raised concerns about the ability of infrastructure to cope, although is supported for sustainability effects
- A new large settlement is generally opposed for a wide number of reasons including landscape, environment, loss of agricultural land, impact on services and roads, lack of flexibility, potential delays in delivery; although limited support shown for a sensitive approach
- Support for the approach to employment growth; general support for the Spatial Principles, mixed comments in support and concern about the five different Spatial Approaches.

3.51. Taking the comments into account, the following changes were made to the Preferred Options document, or no change was made due to the reasons listed:

- Strategic Priorities – amendments were made to include references to net zero carbon, mobility hubs, accessibility, emergency healthcare. The Strategic Priorities cover topics in a broader sense, with detailed issues being covered by Development Management policies.
- Vision – added emphasis has been given to the supporting text in relation to sustainable and active travel, healthy living environments and economic growth.
- Spatial Principles – the purpose of the Green Belt is clear within the Preferred Options Local Plan, as set out in Strategic Priority 4 and Strategic Policy S1 (Spatial Principles). No review of the Green Belt is proposed, and the Green Belt will continue to be protected from inappropriate development.
- Spatial Approaches and Spatial Strategy – alternative Spatial Strategies and site allocations have been considered, tested and rejected as they perform less well than the preferred Spatial Strategy and site allocations. The preferred Spatial Strategy is an evolution of the five spatial approaches tested at Issues and Options stage, which overall received a mixed reception in the comments, and three hybrid Spatial Strategies tested in 2023. Further detail is included in Section 4.

NPPF 2023 Checklist

3.52. The Council has reviewed the Preferred Options Local Plan against the requirements of the latest 2023 NPPF. Table 1 shows that the plan meets the majority of requirements in full in respect of the Spatial Strategy. The full Preferred Options Local Plan Form and Contents Checklist (March 2024) is available at www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review

Table 1

The following table compares the content of the Preferred Options Local Plan against key requirements set out in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) published in December 2023. It is based on the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Local Plan Route Mapper & Toolkits. The full table can be viewed in the [Preferred Options Local Plan Form and Contents Checklist \(March 2024\)](#). The table below shows that the plan meets the majority of requirements in full.

No.	NPPF Requirement	Paragraph	Commentary
	<i>Plan Content</i>		
6.	Include strategic policies to address priorities for the development and use of land. They should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places.	17, 20	Included in Strategic Policies and Site Allocation policies.
8.	Strategic policies should look ahead over a minimum 15-year period <u>from adoption</u> . Where larger scale developments are proposed that form part of the strategy for the area, policies should be set within a vision which looks further ahead (at least 30 years).	22	Applied throughout including for the Garden Communities to have a long-term Vision. On adoption, the plan will continue to have a 15-year period.
9.	Indicate broad locations for development on a key diagram, and land use designations and allocations on a policies map.	23	Provided in Figure 13.
10.	Strategic policies should provide a clear strategy for bringing sufficient land forward, and at a sufficient rate, to address objectively assessed needs over the plan period.	23	Applied throughout in site policies and in a detailed housing trajectory (Appendix C).

No.	NPPF Requirement	Paragraph	Commentary
	<i>Housing</i>		
18.	Set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflects the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations.	67, 68	There are four designated neighbourhood areas with Neighbourhood Plans in progress. The Preferred Options plan continues to set out a housing requirement of 100 new dwellings for Danbury designated neighbourhood area. Broomfield and Boreham are not being considered for new housing growth in the preferred Spatial Strategy. East Hanningfield does fall within the overall strategy options for growth and a housing requirement will be considered if requested by the Neighbourhood Plan body.
19.	Identify a supply of specific, deliverable sites for years one to five of the plan period, and specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the plan.	68	Appendix C and site allocation policies meet this requirement.
20.	Identify land to accommodate at least 10% of the housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare; unless it can be demonstrated that there are strong reasons why the 10% target cannot be achieved.	70	The Preferred Options Local Plan includes sites to accommodate around 5% (around 1,000 homes) of the housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare. It is not possible to achieve 10% in part due to a lack a suitable promoted sites with the preferred Spatial Strategy area. Further information will be set out in the Preferred Options Housing Topic Paper.
25.	Include a trajectory illustrating the expected rate of housing delivery over the plan period.	75	Detailed trajectory is included in Appendix C.
26.	Be responsive to local circumstances and support rural housing developments that reflect local needs.	82	Set out in Strategic Policy S7 and Policy DM2.
27.	Identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.	83	Defined Settlement Boundaries (DSBs) allow development to come forward within villages in principle. Strategic Policy S7 allows new growth sites which are in accordance with the Spatial Principles and

No.	NPPF Requirement	Paragraph	Commentary
			Strategic Policies to be allocated through relevant Neighbourhood Plans.
	<i>Economy</i>		
30.	<p>Set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth.</p> <p>Set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period.</p> <p>Seek to address potential barriers to investment and be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.</p>	86	Set out in various plan policies including Strategic Policies S6-S8, Policies DM4-DM6 and employment site allocations including SGS16b and GS9a. The plan considers economic changes since adoption, including the latest predicted growth sectors and the updated Employment Land Review regards needs for future employment floorspace.
31.	Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.	87	Set out in various plan policies including Strategic Policies S6-S8, Policies DM4-DM6 and employment site allocations including SGS16b and GS9a. The plan considers economic changes since adoption, including the latest predicted growth sectors and the updated Employment Land Review regards needs for future employment floorspace.
32.	Support a prosperous rural economy.	88	Set out in various plan policies including Strategic Policies S6-S8, Policies DM4-DM6 and employment site allocations including SGS16b and GS9a. The plan considers economic changes since adoption, including the latest predicted growth sectors and the updated Employment Land Review regards needs for future employment floorspace. The plan continues to allocate Rural Employment Areas and proposes extensions to two employment areas outside built-up areas.

No.	NPPF Requirement	Paragraph	Commentary
	<i>Town centres</i>		
	Allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. Where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre.	90	The Retail Capacity Study 2023 does not consider it necessary for the plan to allocate additional convenience or comparison goods floorspace in Chelmsford City Centre or South Woodham Ferrers Town Centre over the plan period to 2041. Policies including DM4 and S17 support appropriate main town uses developments. Chelmsford City Centre boundary has been updated in line with the Retail Capacity Study 2023.
35.	Recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.	90	Recognised in policies DM4 and S17 and residential site allocations in Location 1.
	<i>Healthy and safe communities</i>		
39.	Plan positively to meet school place requirements and to encourage development which will widen choice in education.	99	Data from ECC Education Services has been used guide site allocations in the plan to ensure appropriate education provision is made. Plan policies including S9, S10 and relevant residential site allocation policies include requirements for new school provision. More detail will be set out in the Preferred Options Infrastructure Topic Paper.
40.	Work proactively and positively with promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to plan for public service infrastructure.	100	The City Council works proactively with service and infrastructure providers as set out in the Preferred Options Duty to Cooperate Position Statement. The plan policies are also supported by needs identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
	<i>Transport</i>		
44.	Actively manage patterns of growth. Significant development should be focused on locations which are/can be made sustainable. Opportunities to maximise sustainable transport	109	These considerations have been considered in the preferred Spatial Strategy (Strategic Policy S7) which is informed by the wider plan

No.	NPPF Requirement	Paragraph	Commentary
	solutions will vary between urban and rural areas - this should be taken into account in plan-making.		evidence base including the 2024 Parish Audit and Integrated Impact Assessment.
45.	Support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.	110	The plan provides for a variety of site types and uses to minimise journeys. The plan includes proposals and policies which seek to reduce the need to travel including Strategic Policies S2 and S16 and site allocations policies. It has also been prepared with the active involvement of local highways authorities.
48.	Provide for any large-scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy. Such facilities include ports, airports, interchanges for rail freight, public transport projects and roadside services.	110	A new roadside facility is identified as a possible complementary employment generating use/service in Strategic Site Allocation 16b.
51.	In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, it should be ensured that: appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location; safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users, the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code; and any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.	114	Provision is set out in plan site allocations including requirements to promote sustainable travel provision and ensure suitable site access. Site policies are supported by other policies including Strategic Policies S1 and S16, the masterplan process and Making Places SPD. The site allocations are also supported by the Transport/Highways Modelling and Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

No.	NPPF Requirement	Paragraph	Commentary
	<i>Making effective use of land</i>		
55.	Set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.	123	The plan seeks to make the best use of brownfield sites to meet future development growth needs as identified in updated evidence base reports including the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment, SHELAA, Urban Capacity Study and Employment Land Review.
56.	Encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains.	124	The plan proposes site allocations on land in both urban and rural areas and seeks to achieve environmental gains e.g., by providing enhanced public access to the countryside, new tree planting (DM17) and biodiversity net gain (DM16).
58.	Give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land.	124	The plan seeks to make the best use of brownfield sites to meet future development growth needs as identified in updated evidence base reports including the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment, SHELAA, Urban Capacity Study and Employment Land Review. Proposed allocations include sites in Location 1 and Growth Site 5.
59.	Promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings.	124	The plan seeks to make the best use of brownfield sites to meet future development growth needs as identified in updated evidence base reports including the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment, SHELAA, Urban Capacity Study and Employment Land Review. Proposed allocations include sites in Location 1.
62.	Support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account the need for different types of housing and other forms of development, local market conditions, the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services, the character and setting of the area, and the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.	128	Addressed in the plan including site allocations and policies including S14, S17 and DM31. The plan is also informed by evidence including on number and type of homes required, land available to accommodate development, market conditions, viability and infrastructure capacity.

No.	NPPF Requirement	Paragraph	Commentary
	<i>Green Belt</i>		
68.	Once established, there is no requirement for Green Belt boundaries to be reviewed or changed when plans are being prepared or updated. Authorities may choose to review and alter Green Belt boundaries where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, in which case proposals for changes should be made only through the plan-making process.	145	No changes are proposed to the adopted Green Belt boundaries in the plan as sufficient land is available to accommodate growth outside of the Green Belt. There are no exceptional circumstances evident to justify any Green Belt amendments.
	<i>Climate change, flooding and coastal change</i>		
71.	Take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating from rising temperature.	158	Set out in plan through Strategic Priority 1 and various policies including Strategic Policy S2, DM16, DM18, DM19, DM25 and DM31. Making Places SPD further supports this.
75.	Steer new development to those areas with the lowest risk of flooding from any source. If this is not possible, the exception test may have to be applied, informed by the potential vulnerability of the site and of the development proposed. Where this is the case, sites needs to demonstrate that the development would provide wider sustainability benefits outweighing the flood risk and that the development would be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere (and where possible will reduce flood risk overall).	168 - 170	Set out in the plan through various policies including Strategic Policies S1, S2 and S9, Policy DM18 and site allocation policies. The plan is supported by updated evidence base reports including Strategic Flood Risk Assessments Level 1 and 2, Water Cycle Studies and Sequential and Exception Testing.
	<i>Minerals</i>		
86.	Provide for the extraction of mineral resources of local and national importance.	215, 216	More relevant to Minerals Planning Authorities. The plan is informed by the Adopted Minerals Local Plan (MLP). Minerals Safeguarding Areas are designated on the Draft Policies Plan. Relevant site allocation policies also require a Minerals Resource

No.	NPPF Requirement	Paragraph	Commentary
	Encourage the prior extraction of minerals, where practical and environmentally feasible, if it is necessary for non-mineral development to take place.		<p>Assessment to be undertaken to assess if the site contains a viable minerals resource that would require extraction prior to development.</p> <p>The MLP is currently under review and any changes required to this new plan will be considered at Pre-Submission stage.</p>

4. Developing the Spatial Strategy

4.1. The review of the adopted Local Plan has considered the status of the adopted Spatial Strategy, and reviewed what additional housing and employment allocations are needed to take the Plan to 2041, with accompanying community and social facilities, as well as the new corporate priorities and strategies of the Council. This includes:

- Future housing needs, as set out in the Housing Topic Paper
- Future employment needs, as set out in the Employment Topic Paper
- Performance of the adopted Local Plan Spatial Strategy and other key policies in delivering allocated development including a review of the latest published [Authority Monitoring Report](#)
- New Council priorities set out in [Our Chelmsford, Our Plan](#), alongside the declaration of a [housing crisis](#), and the [climate emergency declaration and action plan](#).

4.2. The amount and type of housing and employment development provides the starting point for the formulation of the Spatial Strategy. The housing and employment requirements for the Local Plan review to 2041 are contained in Strategic Policy S6, with further explanation of how the figures have been derived in the Housing Topic Paper and the Employment Topic Paper (available at www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review).

4.3. Strategic Policy S7 sets out the overall need for the housing requirement at 19,000 new dwellings. This is in line with the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment 2023 and aligns with the adopted Local Plan at the rate of 1,000 homes a year. Since the Local Plan adoption, there have been 18,705 completions, allocations, permissions and windfall development. This leaves a shortfall of 3,862 new homes, which includes a buffer of around 19% - which forms the figure for new proposed allocations, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Housing requirement

Housing requirement for Plan period	22,567 homes
Completions 2022-23	822
Adopted Local Plan allocations	12,677
Sites with planning permission	3,745
Windfall allowance (2026-2041)	1,461
New allocations needed	3,862

4.4. For employment, the requirement in Strategic Policy S6 for the Plan period is 162,646sqm of employment floorspace, of which 55,000sqm is on allocated sites and 107,646sqm is on new sites, as shown in Table 3. The overall requirement is informed by the Employment Land Review 2023 and described further in the Employment Topic Paper.

Table 3: Employment requirement

Employment requirement for Plan period	162,646 sqm
Adopted Local Plan allocations	55,000 sqm
New allocations needed	107,646 sqm

Land supply, constraints and opportunities

- 4.5. Land supply is informed mainly by the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Assessment (SHELAA), as set out in the NPPF (Para 69). The purpose of the SHELAA is to identify additional sites that may be suitable for development in the Local Plan for the period to 2041. The first call for sites took place in late 2014 to identify available land for all types of uses, to establish what land could potentially be made available in the future. Further opportunities to submit sites for consideration have been offered on a rolling annual basis.
- 4.6. The most recent SHELAA assessment covers the period 2014 to 2022, and lists all submitted sites. The 2024 SHELAA assessment will be published alongside the Preferred Options consultation. It is not the purpose of the SHELAA to allocate land for future development, but the assessment outcomes are considered alongside other evidence base documents to enable the Council to make informed decisions of where to allocate future development. The assessment generates a potential capacity figure, and assesses sites on their suitability, availability, achievability, physical constraints, environmental impact, and compliance with existing and emerging planning policy.
- 4.7. To accommodate future growth identified in the review of the adopted Local Plan, the City Council wants to continue to prioritise development on brownfield sites in the urban area, to minimise the amount of development on greenfield sites in the wider city area (Strategic Policy S1 – Spatial Principles; Strategic Policy S17 – Future of Chelmsford City Centre). This approach follows Section 11 of the NPPF, by giving substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land for homes and other needs, and promoting the development of under-utilised land and buildings. However, very few of the sites submitted in the most recent call for sites were for brownfield land in the urban area.
- 4.8. The overall allocations carried forward from the adopted Local Plan and new allocations in the Preferred Options document total 18,000 new homes, of which 2,765 are on previously developed (brownfield) sites in the City Centre. Of these new allocations of 7,822 new homes, 747 are on previously developed sites in the City Centre.
- 4.9. Therefore, to meet our development needs it is inevitable that some agricultural land will be used for development, leading to the loss of approximately 853 hectares of Grade 3 agricultural land and approximately 246 hectares of Grade 2 land. This equates to around 2.4% of the total Grade 2 land and around 4.2% of the total Grade 3 land in the Council's administrative area. The importance of the best and most versatile agricultural land is recognised in Strategic Policy S4 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment.

Green Belt

4.10. No development is being proposed through the Local Plan in the Green Belt. Many major cities in the UK have an area of open land around their built-up area which is designated as Green Belt. This is designed to prevent the unrestricted sprawl of these cities. The Green Belt in Chelmsford is part of London's Green Belt often referred to as the Metropolitan Green Belt. This covers almost 34% of the land in the south and west of Chelmsford, as shown in Figure 1. The Green Belt is protected in the strongest terms to prevent the encroachment of urban growth into open undeveloped areas and the coalescence of existing built-up areas, following the approach of Section 13 of the NPPF.

4.11. The role of the Green Belt is set out in Strategic Priority 4 - Ensuring sustainable patterns of development and protecting the Green Belt; Strategic Policy S1 – Spatial Principles; S11 - The Role of the Countryside; and implemented through Policy DM6, DM9, DM10, DM11 and DM12 controlling different types of construction in the Green Belt.

Figure 1: London's Green Belt



Green Wedge

- 4.12. Around 3% of the land in the Council's administrative area is designated as the Green Wedge. This is a key landscape designation covering the river valleys where they permeate into Chelmsford's urban area, which has been enshrined in Chelmsford development plans since 2008. No development is proposed through the Local Plan within the Green Wedge.
- 4.13. The Green Wedge has a unique role and function in shaping the City's growth and character. This multi-faceted green network prevents urban sprawl and settlement coalescence, and provides for wildlife and nature conservation, provides flood storage capacity, leisure and recreation opportunities, and active travel routes through multifunctional greenways.
- 4.14. The role of the Green Wedge is set out in Strategic Policy S11 - The Role of the Countryside, and implemented through Policy DM7, DM9, DM10, DM11 and DM12 controlling different types of construction in the Green Wedge.

Flood risk

- 4.15. Another factor determining appropriate locations for development growth is flood risk and flood management. Areas of high flood risk are avoided, and Local Plan allocations have been subject to a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. The Council has followed a sequential risk-based approach, including the application of the exception test where some continuing development is necessary for wider sustainable reasons; and will require measures including SuDS to manage surface water. The approach is set out in Strategic Priority 1 – Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency; Strategic Policy S1 – Spatial Principles; and implemented through Policy DM18 – Flooding/SuDS.

Strategic Priorities

- 4.16. Using the above considerations as a starting point, the Spatial Strategy has been developed by adding in further layers of opportunity and constraint, as set out in the Strategic Priorities, the Vision, and the Spatial Principles.
- 4.17. The Preferred Options Consultation Document sets out Strategic Priorities that are the key priorities that the Local Plan is based on. These priorities set the overall policy direction for all the strategic policies, site allocations and development management policies in the Local Plan. In particular, they look at what Chelmsford is like today, how things are changing, what issues need to be addressed and what opportunities will be created. This will ensure that the Local Plan recognises Chelmsford's spatial characteristics in planning for its future development.

Table 4: Proposed Strategic Priorities

Priorities for climate	Priorities for growth	Priorities for place
1. Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency	4. Ensuring sustainable patterns of development and protecting the Green Belt	7. Creating well designed and attractive places, and promoting the health and social wellbeing of communities
2. Promoting smart, active travel and sustainable transport	5. Meeting the needs for new homes	8. Delivering new and improved strategic and local infrastructure
3. Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, and support an increase in biodiversity and ecological networks	6. Fostering growth and investment and providing new jobs	9. Encouraging resilience in retail, leisure, commercial and cultural development

Vision

4.18. The Strategic Priorities are distilled into a Vision which sets out in a few words the kind of place we want Chelmsford to be in 2041:

‘Guiding Chelmsford’s growth towards a greener, fairer and more connected community’

Spatial Principles

4.19. The Strategic Priorities and Vision in turn lead to nine Spatial Principles, which direct development to the most sustainable locations. These are set out in Strategic Policy S1, and are set out below:

- a) Locate development at well-connected and sustainable locations
- b) Protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development
- c) Promote the use of suitable previously developed land for development
- d) Continue the renewal and enhance the vitality of Chelmsford City Centre and its Urban Area
- e) Focus development at the higher order settlements outside the Green Belt and respect the development pattern and hierarchy of other settlements
- f) Respect the character and appearance of landscapes and the built environment, and preserve or enhance the historic and natural environment and biodiversity
- g) Locate development to avoid or manage flood risk and reduce carbon emissions
- h) Ensure development is served by necessary infrastructure and encourage innovation
- i) Locate development to utilise existing and planned infrastructure effectively
- j) Ensure development is deliverable.

4.20. The Spatial Principles are not listed in order of preference or priority but are all interrelated and have been considered together to shape the Spatial Strategy.

Settlement hierarchy

4.21. Another structuring factor for developing the Spatial Strategy is the Settlement Hierarchy. The Settlement Hierarchy ranks settlements according to their size, function, characteristics and sustainability.

Table 5: Settlement Hierarchy

Category	Settlement	
City or Town	Chelmsford, South Woodham Ferrers	
Key Service Settlements	Outside Green Belt	Within Green Belt
	Bicknacre, Boreham, Broomfield, Danbury and Great Leighs	Galleywood, Runwell, Stock and Writtle
Service Settlements	Outside Green Belt	Within Green Belt
	East Hanningfield, Ford End, Great Waltham, Little Waltham, Rettendon Place and Woodham Ferrers	Highwood, Margaretting, Ramsden Heath/Downham, Roxwell and West Hanningfield
Small Settlements	Outside Green Belt	Within Green Belt
	Chatham Green, Good Easter, Howe Green, Howe Street, Little Baddow, Rettendon Common and Sandon	Edney Common

4.22. The City of Chelmsford and Town of South Woodham Ferrers are at the top of the hierarchy. These are considered the most sustainable as they have the most functions and the best services and facilities including transport links and employment opportunities. They also have the most potential to provide new infrastructure. Accordingly, most new development over the Local Plan period is proposed in and around these settlements.

4.23. Key Service Settlements provide a range of services and facilities for their residents. These include primary school provision, local employment opportunities, convenience shopping facilities, community facilities, good links by public transport to higher order settlements, good access to the strategic road network, and in most cases primary healthcare provision. This makes the Key Service Settlements suitable as a focus for housing provision outside Chelmsford and South Woodham Ferrers, with a higher level of growth due to their higher level of services, facilities and economic activity. Growth in Key Service Settlements aims to increase their self-containment and enhance their service role, reflecting the aspirations of national policy in promoting stronger communities.

4.24. Service Settlements have more limited services and facilities but typically include primary schools, convenience shopping facilities and community facilities making them suitable for a more limited scale of development. Growth in Service Settlements outside the Green Belt will reinforce their role as a provider of services to the local rural area and reflect the aspirations of national policy in promoting stronger communities.

- 4.25. Small Settlements have the least services and facilities and transport links which means they are bottom of the Settlement Hierarchy. These are considered the least sustainable. However, there may be limited opportunities for small-scale development growth within these areas through affordable housing exception sites, or other development promoted through Neighbourhood Plans.

Testing Spatial Strategy approaches

- 4.26. Considering the quantum of development, and taking the Strategic Priorities, Vision, Spatial Principles and Settlement Hierarchy into account, a number of types of locations were considered as follows:

- Growth in urban areas
- Expanding allocated sites
- Growth along transport corridors
- Development at larger villages
- Development at smaller villages
- New large settlement/garden community

Balancing these priorities and principles led to the development of five Spatial Approaches for testing during the Issues and Options consultation.

Approach A – Growing the existing strategy

- Expanding allocated sites, using previously developed land, growth in larger villages

Approach B – Concentrating growth in urban areas

- Maximising development in the City Centre and urban area, expanding allocated sites

Approach C – Exploring a wider strategy

- Expanding allocated sites, growth at larger villages, growth at smaller villages

Approach D – Exploring growth along transport corridors

- Maximising growth at Chelmsford Garden Community, growth along main transport corridors

Approach E – Exploring a new settlement

- Expanding Chelmsford Garden Community, a further large new settlement/garden community

- 4.27. At Issues and Options stage, the IIA and consultation responses in the YSWD feedback document (Section 3) highlighted the similarity between some of the Approaches, and areas where the impacts would be similar. For further technical testing in Summer 2023, therefore, the five Approaches were reduced to three Spatial Strategy 'hybrid' approaches. Testing the three rather than the original five Approaches was a more pragmatic way of testing whilst reducing duplication, time and cost of carrying out evidence base studies.

4.28. The three hybrid approaches were:

1. Growing the existing strategy
2. Exploring a new settlement and employment locations
3. Exploring growth along transport corridors

All 'hybrid' approaches considered:

- Locations for 6,500 new homes in line with the latest shortfall at the time of 6,138 homes
- Locations for 8,900sqm office, 90,850sqm B2/B8 in line with draft employment needs study
- Brownfield sites in Chelmsford Urban Area in line with latest information on viability and call for sites
- 3,250 homes in North East Chelmsford in line with the extant outline planning application
- A major new stand-alone mixed use employment site off Junction 17 or 18 of the A12.

4.29. Since this further technical testing, the overall number of new homes required has reduced due to recent successful delivery, the number of homes at North East Chelmsford has increased, and the amount of employment space has been reduced to align with available sites. These changes are translated into the Preferred Spatial Strategy and further technical testing has taken place.

The Preferred Spatial Strategy

4.30. The Spatial Strategy is shaped by the Vision, Spatial Principles and the need to secure sustainable development. This includes the protection of the Green Belt and valued landscapes of Green Wedges. The Spatial Strategy avoids new development in areas of high flood risk, or ensures that any flood risk is managed for development at highly sustainable locations in Chelmsford City Centre. The Local Plan will focus new development, including housing and employment growth, leisure, office, cultural and tourist facilities, retail and mixed use development at the most sustainable locations that meet the Local Plan Vision and Spatial Principles.

4.31. The Spatial Strategy sets out to maximise existing infrastructure and access to existing services and use housing growth to help deliver new infrastructure to meet local needs whilst at the same time seeking to create attractive and successful new places and neighbourhoods and to protect valuable natural assets. It is a long-term strategy that creates certainty and will deliver growth and change over the plan period and beyond.

4.32. The Preferred Spatial Strategy continues the principles used for the adopted Local Plan, and distributes growth across a number of sites clustered into three Growth Areas, to aid infrastructure planning and improve sustainability. Sites already allocated in the adopted Local Plan are brought forward as part of the review, with some additional sites to meet the needs over the longer Plan period to 2041.

4.33. **Growth Area 1 – Central and urban Chelmsford:**

Development in this area will deliver a number of benefits including green infrastructure and city greening, enhanced bus services, and opportunities to maximise walking and cycling into the City Centre. Previously developed land in the City Centre will be used to strengthen

and expand the City as a major residential and employment centre. New development will be focused in:

- Chelmsford Urban Area – same sites as in adopted Local Plan, plus an additional 747 homes on six new sites
- West Chelmsford – same site as adopted Local Plan but a small increase of number of homes, as justified by the planning application process
- East of Chelmsford – same sites as adopted Local Plan but increased number of homes, as justified by the Masterplan process
- Galleywood – same site as adopted Local Plan but increased number of homes, as justified by the planning application process
- Writtle – same site as adopted Local Plan.

4.34. **Growth Area 2 – North Chelmsford:**

Development in this area will deliver a substantial number of new homes and employment over the Local Plan period, underpinned by a comprehensive package of new infrastructure including new schools, early years and childcare provision, green infrastructure and neighbourhood centres. New development will be focused in:

- North East Chelmsford (Chelmsford Garden Community) – will continue as a key area for new neighbourhoods and employment opportunities, with significant growth in attractive well-designed communities centred around open space and leisure facilities. Same area as allocated in the adopted Local Plan with an additional 3,250 homes and 11,946sqm additional employment land
- Great Leighs – same sites as in adopted Local Plan, but a reduced number on one site as justified by the planning application process and an amended location to one site to accommodate a Travelling Showpeople site
- North of Broomfield – same site as in adopted Local Plan but a small increase of number of homes, as justified by the planning application process
- Waltham Road Employment Area – new allocation of 3,500sqm as an extension to an existing employment site
- Ford End – two new small site allocations each for around 20 homes
- North West Chelmsford, Little Boyton Hall Farm Employment Area – new allocation of 6,000sqm as an extension to an existing employment site.

4.35. **Growth Area 3 – South and East Chelmsford:**

Proposals include a high quality and comprehensively planned new Garden Community to the East of Chelmsford at Hammonds Farm, and a strategic employment site, along with smaller village allocations to contribute towards supporting existing village facilities and services. New development will be focused in:

- South Woodham Ferrers – same site as in adopted Local Plan but increased number of homes and employment, as justified by the Masterplanning process
- South of Bicknacre – one site as in adopted Local Plan, and two new smaller site allocations each for around 20 homes
- St Giles, Bicknacre – same site as in adopted Local Plan
- Danbury – sites being allocated by the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan (subject to consultation alongside the Local Plan)
- East Chelmsford Garden Community (Hammonds Farm) – a new landscape-led development centred around distinctive neighbourhoods supported by transport, new schools and early years and childcare provision, health care, utility services and green infrastructure together with retail, community, employment and leisure uses.

Around 3,000 new homes and 43,000sqm of employment floorspace in the period up to 2041. It is also considered able to provide a further 1,500 new homes in the period beyond 2041

- Also Land Adjacent to A12 Junction 18 Employment Area for 43,000sqm of new employment use
- East Hanningfield – two new smaller site allocations for around 15 and 20 homes.

Other housing needs

4.36. The provisional findings of the Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment that covers the period 2023 to 2041 identifies a requirement for a range of between 36 and 77 Gypsy and Traveller pitches and 25 Travelling Showpeople plots to be developed by 2041. The Council will expect to see Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation provided on large strategic development allocations. The Preferred Spatial Strategy makes provision for the following:

Traveller pitches:

- North East Chelmsford Garden Community (10 pitches)
- East Chelmsford Garden Community (20 pitches)

Travelling Showpeople Plots:

- West Chelmsford (5 plots)
- North East Chelmsford Garden Community (10 plots)
- Great Leighs (5 plots)
- North of South Woodham Ferrers (5 plots)

Allocation of small sites

4.37. The Government requires Local Plans to make some of its housing allocations on small sites of no more than a hectare. Small sites can often be built out relatively quickly, boosting the supply of homes early in the plan period, and enabling smaller development companies to build locally.

4.38. Over 90 small sites were submitted for consideration for development. More than half have been discounted because they are in the Green Belt or Green Wedge. Many other sites are unsuitable for a number of reasons such as due to not meeting other Local Plan policies on a wide range of issues, being in an unsustainable location, being distant from defined settlements, or other factors including topology. The full assessment (SHELAA) can be viewed on the Council's website.

4.39. The Council plans to deal with about 50% of the small sites requirement through allocations to be built during the first 10 years of the reviewed Local Plan, listed under the Growth Areas above.

Alternatives considered

4.40. Throughout the Preferred Options Local Plan each policy includes any 'Alternatives considered'. 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 Preferred Options 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. Alternatives to the Preferred Spatial Strategy were considered and rejected as summarised below:

Table 6: Alternatives excluded and reasons

Alternative	Reason for Exclusion
Not having a Spatial Strategy	The Spatial Strategy is a fundamental part of the Local Plan. Not having a policy would undermine the delivery of the Plan's Vision, Strategic Priorities and create uncertainty and ultimately lead to unplanned and uncoordinated development not supported by necessary infrastructure. It would result in the removal of specified development allocations and the Settlement Hierarchy which guides future planning decisions and promotes sustainable development.
Development growth in the Green Belt	Sufficient and suitable land is available outside the Green Belt to meet the development needs within the Council's administrative area in a sustainable way. It would also undermine the protection of the Green Belt by national planning policy.
Development growth in the Green Wedge	The Green Wedge is a locally important designation following the river valleys which have been enshrined in Chelmsford development plans since 2008 and has helped shape Chelmsford's growth. Changes to the Green Wedge boundaries to allow development growth has been discounted as sufficient and suitable land is available outside the Green Wedge to meet the area's development needs in a sustainable way.
<p>Alternative Spatial Strategy – Expand the existing development allocations within the adopted Spatial Strategy with further expansion of North East Chelmsford (Chelmsford Garden Community).</p> <p>This differs from the preferred Spatial Strategy by substituting the proposed new East Chelmsford Garden Community (Hammonds Farm) with further expansion of existing adopted strategic development allocations including North East Chelmsford (Chelmsford Garden Community).</p>	
Broomfield	The impact on and the capacity of the local road network and relative remoteness from the strategic road network.
East Chelmsford	The need to prevent coalescence with Sandon Village as identified in the adopted Sandon Neighbourhood Plan.
West Chelmsford	The impact on and the capacity of the local road network and relative remoteness from the strategic road network.
Great Leighs	Landscape capacity and sensitivity concerns and the capacity limits of the wastewater recycling facilities serving the area.
North-East Chelmsford Garden Community	Promoted development sites are not deliverable within the plan period given permitted mineral extraction and land remediation works.

South Woodham Ferrers	The impact on and the capacity of the strategic and local road network and capacity limits of the wastewater recycling facilities serving the area.
<p>Alternative Spatial Strategy – Growth along transport corridors at Chatham Green, Boreham, Howe Green and Rettendon.</p> <p>This differs from the preferred Spatial Strategy by substituting the East Chelmsford Garden Community with growth at Chatham Green and expansion of Boreham, Howe Green and Rettendon Common.</p>	
Boreham	The impact on the local road network, landscape capacity and sensitivity concerns and uncertainty whether the promoted development would generate the need for a new primary school given the acute lack of existing primary school capacity.
Chatham Green	Its relative isolation from existing services and facilities which would lead to higher reliance on the use of the private car, landscape capacity and sensitivity concerns and capacity limits at the wastewater recycling facilities serving the area.
Howe Green	Its relative isolation from existing services and facilities which would lead to higher reliance on the use of the private car, the impact on the local road network and the lack of strategic highway capacity at Junction 17 of the A12.
Rettendon Common	Its relative isolation from existing services and facilities and the strategic road and transport network which would lead to higher reliance on the use of the private car.
Rettendon Place	The settlement is constrained by the Green Belt to south and west, its relative isolation from existing services and facilities which would lead to higher reliance on the use of the private car and landscape capacity and sensitivity concerns.
<p>Locations which could have formed part of an alternative Spatial Strategy – Other Key Service and Service Settlements outside the Green Belt.</p> <p>The preferred Spatial Strategy allocates small housing sites at Ford End, East Hanningfield and Bicknacre and an allocation of around 100 new homes at Danbury being allocated through the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan.</p>	
Great Waltham	No sites with a capacity of 10 or more homes have been promoted.
Little Waltham	Promoted sites either fall within the Green Wedge, have a negative impact on the local highway network, would not support the provision of a new primary school and/or create coalescence with the development at Chelmsford Garden Community.
Woodham Ferrers	No sites are promoted which are adjacent to the settlement boundary.
Alternative Spatial Strategy - Employment development at Howe Green (Junction 17 of the A12)	This option has been rejected given the lack of strategic highway capacity at Junction 17 of the A12 and no deliverable junction improvements planned to accommodate strategic scale employment growth at this location. This location has lower landscape capacity to accommodate employment development compared with the Council's preferred option at Location 16b.

Neighbourhood Plans

- 4.41. There are four designated neighbourhood areas with plans in progress. The NPPF says that strategic policies should set a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas to reflect the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development.
- 4.42. The Preferred Spatial Strategy brings forward Strategic Growth Site Policy 13 from the adopted Local Plan. This sets a housing requirement of 100 new dwellings for Danbury designated neighbourhood area to be brought forward through the Neighbourhood Plan, which now form proposed allocations. The Danbury Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted to the Council for Regulation 16 consultation, which will be carried out at the same time as the Preferred Options Local Plan.
- 4.43. There is no strategic requirement for Broomfield neighbourhood area to be considered for housing growth as the Preferred Spatial Strategy does not propose additional housing to that already included in the adopted Local Plan. However, the Broomfield Neighbourhood Plan proposes an allocation for community-led housing to meet local needs. The Broomfield Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted to the Council for Regulation 16 consultation, which will be carried out at the same time as the Preferred Options Local Plan.
- 4.44. There is no strategic requirement for Boreham neighbourhood area or East Hanningfield neighbourhood area to be considered for housing growth, as these areas are not contained within the Preferred Spatial Strategy. Neither area has requested a requirement figure for housing growth.

What the evidence says about the Spatial Strategy

- 4.45. The Preferred Spatial Strategy has been shaped and developed alongside the outcomes of the technical evidence base studies. The key conclusions are as follows:

Document	Conclusions
CC001: Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024 Level 1	The document was published in February 2024, and has therefore influenced the Spatial Strategy. The information within it is being used to apply the Sequential Test to strategic allocations and identify where the Exception Test may be needed. Recommendations to reduce flood risk through site design, promotion of SuDS, reducing surface water runoff, enhance and restore river corridors, and mitigate against risk are captured through specific requirements for allocation sites, underpinned by commitments in Strategic and Development Management Policies.
Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), April 2024	Adds further detail to the Level 1 SFRA (CC001), with additional guidance for windfall and unassessed sites. It also identifies the sites requiring the Level 2 assessment, which is being used to identify if/where the Exception Test may be needed.
Site Allocations Sequential and Exception Tests	Site specific information is recorded setting out the testing undertaken for sites within the Spatial Strategy.

Document	Conclusions
CC002: Water Cycle Study; Scoping and Stage 2 2024	A preliminary assessment of the baseline conditions concluded that the capacity of the existing Water Recycling Centres (WRCs) and the associated impact on water quality and water environment are the greatest potential issues relating to growth. In particular the water recycling centre at Great Leighs is unlikely to be able to accommodate any additional housing growth. This is a key reason that an alternative strategy for growth at Chatham Green was rejected.
OSP003: Preferred Options Local Plan Form and Contents Checklist 2024	See Table 1
PL002: Parish Audit Update 2024	The results of the audit support the Settlement Hierarchy as included in the adopted Local Plan. Overall, the amount and types of services and facilities for each settlement remains very similar to an Audit from 2018. It is not considered that the recorded changes to facilities, services and bus services are sufficient to require a change in the position of any settlement within the existing Settlement Hierarchy
PL003: Urban Area and Defined Settlement Boundary Review 2024	The review supports the urban area boundaries and defined settlement boundaries proposed with the Local Plan Preferred Options, which are used as one of the factors informing the preferred Spatial Strategy. Any changes proposed are very minor, and do not impact on the proposed sites selection.
AH002: Housing Capacity in Chelmsford City Centre and Urban Area 2024	Data is presented which informs the selection of development sites in Chelmsford City Centre and urban area. It includes sites completed since adoption of the Local Plan, sites for bringing forward to the Preferred Options, sites promoted through the SHELAA, and allocation of small sites. It concludes that there are six available and deliverable sites which are suitable for allocation in the Spatial Strategy.
T002: Transport Impact of Preferred Spatial Approach 2024	The appraisal considers the potential traffic impact of the Preferred Options Spatial Strategy and the likely effectiveness of proposed infrastructure and/or sustainable measures to mitigate the impact of development traffic growth. It concluded that, with a focus on development along the A12 corridor, the modelled traffic impact of the Spatial Strategy is largely limited to the A12 corridor, the junctions along it and, to a lesser extent, the A1114 and A138 corridors into Chelmsford City Centre. The minor quantum of development allocated in rural areas of Chelmsford is of insufficient size to likely impact the local road network.

5. Next steps

- 5.1. This Topic Paper will be updated and expanded on following feedback to the Preferred Options consultation and progress of further evidence-based documents. An updated version will be published at the next stage of Local Plan Consultation (Pre-Submission) setting out the progress made and the reasoning behind the proposals in the Pre-Submission Consultation Document.

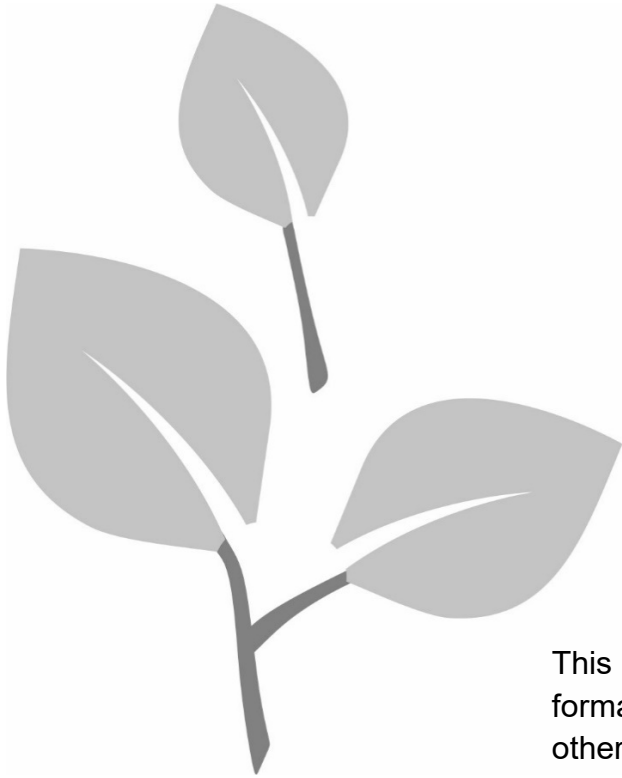
Appendix 1: Preferred Options Local Plan Consultation – Proposed Site Allocations

Site No.	Site name	Location	Proposed development	Site Status	Policies Map No.
1a	Chelmer Waterside allocations (CW1a and CW1c-f)	Chelmsford Urban Area	880 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1b	Former St Peter's College, Fox Crescent	Chelmsford Urban Area	185 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1d	Riverside Ice and Leisure Land, Victoria Road	Chelmsford Urban Area	150 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1e	Civic Centre Land, Fairfield Road	Chelmsford Urban Area	100 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1f	Eastwood House Car Park, Glebe Road	Chelmsford Urban Area	197 homes including flexible workspace facilities	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1g	Chelmsford Social Club, Springfield Road	Chelmsford Urban Area	29 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1h	Ashby House Car Parks, New Street	Chelmsford Urban Area	80 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1i	Rectory Lane Car Park West	Chelmsford Urban Area	75 homes, potential for student accommodation	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1k	Former Chelmsford Electrical and Car Wash, Brook Street	Chelmsford Urban Area	40 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1l	BT Telephone Exchange, Cottage Place	Chelmsford Urban Area	30 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1m	Rectory Lane Car Park East	Chelmsford Urban Area	23 homes, potential for student accommodation	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1n	Waterhouse Lane Depot and Nursery	Chelmsford Urban Area	20 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1o	Church Hall Site, Woodhall Road	Chelmsford Urban Area	12 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1p	British Legion, London Road	Chelmsford Urban Area	15 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1q	Rear of 17 to 37 Beach's Drive	Chelmsford Urban Area	18 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1r	Garage Site, St Nazaire Road	Chelmsford Urban Area	12 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1s	Garage Site and Land, Medway Close	Chelmsford Urban Area	6 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1t	Car Park R/O Bellamy Court, Broomfield Road	Chelmsford Urban Area	10 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	4

1u	Rivermead, Bishop Hall Lane	Chelmsford Urban Area	315 homes of student accommodation	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1v	Railway Sidings, Brook Street	Chelmsford Urban Area	Business or industrial use	In Adopted Local Plan	4
1w	Meadows/Meadows Surface Car Park	Chelmsford Urban Area	350 homes	New proposal	4
1x	Former Kay Metzeler Premises, Brook Street	Chelmsford Urban Area	185 homes	New proposal	4
1y	Land between Hoffmans Way and Brook Street (Marriage's Mill)	Chelmsford Urban Area	100 homes	New proposal	4
1z	Granary Car Park, Victoria Road	Chelmsford Urban Area	60 homes	New proposal	4
1aa	Coval Lane Car Park	Chelmsford Urban Area	40 homes	New proposal	4
1bb	Glebe Road Car Park	Chelmsford Urban Area	12 homes	New proposal	4
2	West Chelmsford	Writtle Parish	880 homes, 5 Travelling Showpeople plots	In Adopted Local Plan	3
3a	East of Chelmsford – Manor Farm	Great Baddow Parish	360 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	3
3b	East of Chelmsford – Land North of Maldon Road (Employment)	Sandon Parish	5,000sqm employment floorspace	In Adopted Local Plan	3
3c	East of Chelmsford – Land South of Maldon Road	Sandon Parish	109 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	3
3d	East of Chelmsford – Land North of Maldon Road (Residential)	Sandon Parish	65 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	3
4	Land North of Galleywood Reservoir	Galleywood Parish	24 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	16
5	Land Surrounding Telephone Exchange, Ongar Road	Writtle Parish	25 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	37
6	North East Chelmsford (Chelmsford Garden Community)	Chelmsford Garden Community Parish	6,250 homes, around 59,946sqm of employment land, 10 Travelling Showpeople plots, 10 Gypsy and Traveller pitches	In Adopted Local Plan	3
7a	Great Leighs - Land at Moulsham Hall	Great and Little Leighs Parish	750 homes, 5 Travelling Showpeople plots	In Adopted Local Plan	18
7b	Great Leighs – Land East of London Road	Great and Little Leighs Parish	190 specialist residential homes for older persons	In Adopted Local Plan	18
7c	Great Leighs – Land North and South of Banters Lane	Great and Little Leighs Parish	100 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	18

8	North of Broomfield	Broomfield/Little Waltham Parish	512 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	10
9a	Waltham Road Employment Area	Boreham Parish	Expansion of existing employment area for 3,500sqm of employment floorspace	New proposal	9
10	North of South Woodham Ferrers	South Woodham Ferrers Parish	1,220 homes, 1,200 sqm business floorspace and 5 Travelling Showpeople plots	In Adopted Local Plan	5
11a	South of Bicknacre	Woodham Ferrers and Bicknacre Parish	42 homes	In Adopted Local Plan	8
11b	Land at Kingsgate, Bicknacre Road	Woodham Ferrers and Bicknacre Parish	20 homes on a site of up to 1ha	New proposal	8
11c	Land West of Barbrook Way	Woodham Ferrers and Bicknacre Parish	20 homes on a site of up to 1ha	New proposal	8
12	St Giles, Moor Hall Lane	Woodham Ferrers and Bicknacre Parish	32 units of specialist residential accommodation	In Adopted Local Plan	8
13	Danbury	Danbury Parish	100 homes to be allocated through the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan	In Adopted Local Plan	12
14a	Land West of Back Lane	Great Waltham Parish	20 homes on a site of up to 1ha	New proposal	15
14b	Land South of Ford End Primary School	Great Waltham Parish	20 homes on a site of up to 1ha	New proposal	15
15	Little Boyton Hall Farm Employment Area	Roxwell Parish	Expansion of existing employment area for 6,000sqm of employment floorspace	New proposal	3
16a	East Chelmsford Garden Community (Hammonds Farm)	Boreham, Chelmer Village, Danbury, Little Baddow and Sandon Parishes	3,000 homes, 43,000sqm employment floorspace, two Gypsy and Traveller sites with 10 serviced pitches each. Further 1,500 homes post 2041.	New proposal	3
16b	Land adjacent to A12 Junction 18 Employment Area	Sandon Parish	43,000sqm employment floorspace	New proposal	3
17a	Land North of Abbey Fields	East Hanningfield Parish	15 homes on a site of up to 1ha	New proposal	13
17b	Land East of Highfields Mead	East Hanningfield Parish	20 homes on a site of up to 1ha	New proposal	13

Highlighted text: Proposed new development allocations in the review of Local Plan.



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