

Committee(s): Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee	Date: 23 November 2022
Subject: Chelmsford City Council Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation 2022	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Phil Drane, Director of Place	Public
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Summary

Chelmsford City Council has recently held an Issues and Options consultation on the review of their adopted Local Plan. The consultation ran for 10 weeks, closing on the 20 October 2022. Whilst the Council is not obliged to formally respond to this consultation, doing so is an important step in ensuring effective co-operation with Chelmsford City Council as it seeks to prepare its Local Plan, including ensuring broad compatibility between it and the Council's own Local Plan Review.

This report provides a summary of the consultation document and provides an overview of the Council's draft response, which has been submitted to comply with the consultation deadline and is subject to committee approval in line with the recommendation (Appendix A).

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

R1. Approve the response to Chelmsford City Council's Local Plan Issues and Options consultation, as set out in Appendix A.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. In accordance with national policy requirements, Chelmsford City Council (CCC) has commenced a review of its adopted Local Plan. CCC's existing Local Plan was adopted in May 2020 and was prepared under a previous iteration of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
2. As its adopted Local Plan is relatively new, many of its policies are considered to perform well and remain generally up to date. However, CCC has identified

several policy areas that require updates, as well as some areas where new policies may be required to address the latest national planning policy.

3. The adopted Local Plan has a plan period which expires in 2036. CCC has indicated that the Local Plan Review will have a plan period until 2041. This should achieve compliance with the national policy requirement for plans to provide a fifteen-year strategy from the date of adoption, which is envisaged for 2025.
4. The Issues and Options stage forms the first formal stage of consultation of the Chelmsford Local Plan Review. Issues and Options consultations, typically identify the main challenges an area is and will experience in the context of planning and development alongside the broad opportunities for addressing these challenges. At this stage, the consultation document identifies several non-equal options for addressing the key issues, which comments are invited on.
5. This is not the last opportunity that the Council will have to comment on CCC's Local Plan Review. It is expected that a further two stages of consultation will be held, in 2023 and 2024 respectively. At each stage, the level of detail will be greater and the final consultation will be on the Pre-Submission Plan, i.e. the version of the Local Plan that CCC intends to adopt.
6. The main areas being consulted on at the Issues and Options stage are:
 - a) Updated Draft Strategic Priorities
 - b) A new draft Vision
 - c) The approach to calculating future development requirements, including homes and jobs
 - d) Spatial Strategy Approaches for accommodating additional future growth to 2041
 - e) The approach to reviewing other planning policies.
7. A summary of the consultation document and the Council's proposed response is provided below.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

8. The consultation document proposes nine strategic priorities to help deliver an updated Local Plan vision. The consultation document provides further detail under each of the priorities on how these priorities will be translated into planning outcomes.
9. The nine strategic priorities listed in the document are:

1. Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency
 2. Promoting smart, active travel and sustainable transport
 3. Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, and support an increase in biodiversity and ecological networks
 4. Ensuring sustainable patterns of development and protecting the Green Belt
 5. Meeting the needs for new homes
 6. Fostering growth and investment and providing new jobs
 7. Creating well designed and attractive places, and promoting the health and social wellbeing of communities
 8. Delivering new and improved infrastructure to support growth
 9. Encouraging resilience in retail, leisure, commercial and cultural development
10. The proposed strategic priorities are considered comprehensive and progressive. The Council's draft response is supportive in this regard. However, it recommends that emphasis is placed on the importance of cross-boundary planning in helping to address aspects across all identified strategic priorities, particularly in the context of infrastructure.
11. The consultation document goes on to identify a number of 'spatial principles' which will help to secure the most appropriate strategy for delivering new development. The proposed principles are:
- 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 and enhance the renewal and 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 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
12. The consultation document further sets out five overall options for the growth strategy of the Local Plan Review. Broadly, these options are:

- a) **Option A: To grow the existing strategy** which would be to increase the number of homes to be delivered on existing housing allocations, including North East Chelmsford (Beaulieu), South Woodham Ferrers and larger villages
 - b) **Option B: To concentrate growth in urban areas** which would be to increase the number of homes to be delivered on the larger allocations, alongside increasing the overall level of growth in Chelmsford City Centre
 - c) **Option C: To explore a wider strategy** which would largely reflect Option B in addition to some growth in smaller settlements
 - d) **Option D: To explore growth along transport corridors** which would largely reflect Option B in addition to some growth along the Howe Green / Rettendon corridor
 - e) **Option E: To explore a new settlement** which would largely reflect Option B in addition to a potential new settlement to the east of Chelmsford (East of the A12, north of A414)
13. At this stage, there is limited information available on the likely impact of each option on infrastructure or the natural environment. These impacts will be identified as part of technical evidence that is yet to be completed by CCC. Such information will likely inform and become available as part of future consultation.
14. The Council's draft response identifies no overall preference amongst the five options for growth but encourages CCC to promote a strategy that makes best use of previously developed land and areas with the best access to infrastructure, including both built facilities and the strategic road and sustainable transport networks

Specific Issues

15. The Council's draft response is one of support to the Issues and Options Consultation, as presented within (Appendix A), with a notable emphasis on the below strategic cross boundary matters:
- a) **Housing Need:** CCC expect to have a housing shortfall of around 8,000 homes between 2022 and 2041. Their intention is to meet their identified housing needs in full, inclusive of a 20% buffer which would create greater resilience and flexibility in housing supply.
 - b) **Economy and Jobs:** The Local Plan Review seeks to address the need for economic growth and job creation, this approach is broadly supported. However, the draft response stresses the need for the Local Plan Review to take account of and take opportunities to grow the linkages between the

Chelmsford economy and the South Essex economy. Of relevance are emerging growth projects within South Essex, including the Thames Freeport and Lower Thames Crossing, which are likely to create both direct and indirect growth in jobs and supply chains beyond the boundaries of South Essex.

- c) **Transport Infrastructure:** It's acknowledged that the need for new or improved transport infrastructure will be assessed further once the preferred locations for new development have been identified and the Council awaits further information on the potential impacts of growth options on the wider highways network. It is important the Council takes this opportunity to highlight the need for continued future cross-boundary engagement should the growth strategy selected create infrastructure demands beyond Chelmsford's administrative boundary. Stressing the importance of understanding and mitigating likely impacts upon shared infrastructure, most significantly transport corridors including the A12, between Chelmsford and the M25, and onward impacts onto the A127.
16. The Council's draft responses emphasise the importance of ensuring compatibility with Brentwood's own emerging Local Plan Review and in doing so, stresses the importance of ongoing and effective engagement to understand likely cross-boundary impacts as technical assessment takes place and the emerging Local Plan progresses.
17. It is recommended that the response set out in Appendix A be approved, serving to endorse the provisionally submitted consultation response, which was submitted in draft to comply with the consultation deadline.

Consultation

18. CCC have undertaken a consultation on Issues and Options (Regulation 18) for a 10 week period, commencing on 11 August and finishing on 20 October. The response set out in Appendix A was submitted to comply with the consultation deadline. This is subject to Member approval in accordance with the recommendation.
19. It is expected that a further two stages of the Local Plan review consultation will be held, in 2023 and 2024 respectively.

References to Corporate Plan

20. The Corporate Plan identifies priority areas, which include protecting our environment, growing our economy, improving housing, and developing our communities. By formally responding to this consultation, the Council can

ensure that the interests of local residents and businesses are given appropriate weight in this regard.

Implications

Financial Implications

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21. This response has been prepared within existing agreed budgets and resources.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Steve Summers, Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer

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22. The Localism Act 2011 places a duty on local planning authorities to co-operate effectively with other prescribed bodies, including other local planning authorities, to achieve sustainable development.
23. The comments submitted by the council respond to the Regulation 18 consultation being carried out.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Director of Place

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24. There are no direct economic implications.

Equality and Diversity Implications

Name/Title: Kim Anderson, Partnerships, Leisure & Funding Manager

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25. Ongoing consultation undertaken by CCC will need to include consideration of equality and diversity.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

26. The council has sought confirmation within its response that full consideration has been given to health implications associated with the proposed route and wider project.

Background Papers

- None.

Appendices to this report

- Appendix A: Brentwood Borough Council response to Chelmsford City Council's Local Plan Issues and Options consultation 2022.