

Planning Policy
Chelmsford City Council
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Civic Centre
Duke Street
Chelmsford
Essex
CM1 1XP

Dear Sir,

Chelmsford local Plan Issues & Options Consultation

I am responding to the above consultation both as a private individual and as the County Councillor for the Broomfield and Writtle Division.

I note the and accept the need in a national context to provide a local plan for the successful development of the City of Chelmsford and its environs, both in terms of its strategy for economic development, the creation of jobs, the construction of new homes and the protection of our environment and landscapes.

This is no small task in any council area that already has seen significant development since the 1960s and in particular over the past two decades. It is difficult to argue against the purpose and principles set out in the above consultation document. However, its conclusions set out in Options 1 – 3 appear very limited in scope and in many ways significantly flawed. I shall set out below those points that I feel should bear upon the future consideration of the Plan.

1. The deficiencies of the Options vary dependent as to where the proposals are located. Suffice it to say that 68% (viz 9,500 homes) of the “Locations” set out in the “Summary of Options” (pg80) are placed in the Broomfield & Writtle County Division from Writtle in the south to Great Leighs and Ford End in the north. These figures do not include the Office / High Tech Business Parks. Surely, without studying the geography, this is overkill placing unnecessary burden on such local infrastructure as currently exists and diminishes the importance of the Greenfield environment that it crucial to the well- being of those who live and work in this area.
2. Notwithstanding the above, it is clear from the public responses at public meetings held by those Parishes most affected by the current proposals¹ that the magnitude of the proposed house numbers is excessive.
3. To build in any one area a number of houses of over (say) 500 would be to place very significant strains on the cohesion of any existing community and runs the certain risk of creating divided communities in areas already struggling to create community following recent increases in the size of their villages e.g. Great Leighs, Broomfield.
4. The overriding consideration is that all the housing proposed, set out in 1 above, is placed in an area that is already poorly served by the existing road network. Moreover, with the configuration of the existing built up areas to the north and west of the urban area of Chelmsford, there is little or no scope for road widening or new roads. The consequence of this is ever worsening congestion on the approaches to the centre of Chelmsford which affects cyclists, private motorists, commercial traffic and public transport.

¹ Broomfield, Writtle, Gt Waltham, Lt Waltham, Gt & Lt Leighs,

5. The inclusion of the “Potential Western Relief Road” is noted but it is at this time simply a dotted line on a map. There are no funds for this road and its construction is unlikely before 2040 well beyond the period covered by the Local Plan 2021 – 2036. Even should this road be started should it end at the A1060, or the A414 or the A12? This is a matter for the Essex County Council Highways to determine but given that no work has commenced on it at this time it cannot be used as a factor in supporting any development to the north / west of Chelmsford.
6. The location and size of the Broomfield Hospital makes it particularly vulnerable to any increase in the number of house built in and around it. Already it is hard pressed to accommodate staff and patients with only one access road from Main Road Broomfield; whether from the north (Braintree) or the south (Chelmsford). Unless due provision is made in the near future for alternative access its viability and effectiveness will be put at risk. The “Potential Western Relief Road” will have no impact on this situation in the foreseeable future envisaged by this Plan.
7. The areas to the west of Chelmsford lie in an area known as the “Golden Triangle” in that it is rich in aggregate. There is no doubt that the land in Writtle to the north of Warren Farm on the A1060 will be rich in these deposits, as indicated by the excavation of all the land in and around Boyton Hall and more recently at Writtle College. It is designated a mineral safeguarding area. This is a major factor in the utilisation of valuable natural resources and the Plan should indicate whether this would mitigate against any large development in this area or would it be subject to the removal of all mineral deposits in the first instance?
8. It is noted that any large scale development in what the Issues & Options Consultation Paper refers to as “West Chelmsford”, being a rain water catchment area, is almost certain to create significant changes to surface water run off to the south which would place areas around Writtle College² at even greater risk of flooding.
9. The Issues & Options Consultation Paper restricts itself largely to development on the western segment of Chelmsford bordering on the urban area. It has been raised by all Parishes that would be affected by the Plan, that it makes no significant proposals for infrastructural measures to mitigate the impact of the additional housing. This would include vehicular access by road to local facilities (e.g. shops, a railway station, hospitals, doctors and dental surgeries); moreover, there is no positive indications of parking facilities for those that are able to access them. Are these to be covered in the next iteration of the Plan?
10. It is clear that with the exception of the “Potential Western Relief Road”, which is not due until after the Plan period finishes, there are no significant road infrastructure changes which are fundamental to any increase in housing to the west of Chelmsford. Currently, the roads are barely able to manage existing traffic flows on the A1060 Roxwell Road, Chignal Road and Rainsford Road especially at peak periods. Why place 68% of housing in this area?
11. The lack of an appropriate road network to the west of Chelmsford is noted by all Parishes in the Broomfield & Writtle Division. They ask why place the housing in the western segment when all the appropriate infrastructure is located or is proposed in the eastern segment; viz the tripling of the A12 from Chelmsford to Colchester, the new railway

² Lordship Road / Cow Watering Lane

station and parking at Beaulieu Park, the North Eastern By Pass (Boreham interchange to Great Leighs), the Sandon Park & Ride and direct access to the A414, A130 and A12.

12. The question is also asked as to why alternative options including other areas around the urban area of Chelmsford have not been considered in the Issues & Options Consultation Paper. All residents are aware of the proposal made to provide up to 5,000 homes at Hammonds Farm and query why Boreham Airfield has not be considered. I believe that other real alternatives should be identified so that all of Chelmsford's 168,000 residents may have the opportunity of considering the best and most realistic way of meeting the Town's future needs and Government demands.
13. Why is there a resistance to the creation of small garden villages (2,000 – 3,000 houses) beyond existing settlements with their own infrastructure e.g. shops, surgery, schools, pubs etc. there is scope from submissions made in the call for sites in at least 4 such areas e.g. Hammonds Farm, Boreham Airfield?

The Leader of the Chelmsford City Council is on record as suggesting that the "Issues & Options" document only makes initial suggestions and that he anticipates there will, as a result of this Consultation, be a number of further options coming forward to meet the aspirations of all Chelmsford's residents for the next 20 years. I look forward to seeing it.

Yours faithfully,

John Aldridge CC

County Council Member for Broomfield & Writtle