

Devolution and Unitary Councils

5th Feb –The Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, informed the leaders of ECC, Southend, and Thurrock, that “*Based on our criteria of geography and readiness set out in the English Devolution White Paper, I am pleased to confirm that Greater Essex has been selected to join the Devolution Priority Programme.*” In addition, it stated that the request for County local elections to be postponed from May had been accepted from May 2025 to May 2026.

CNEB

The main works are now underway on Section 1A following the appointment of Octavius Infrastructure as contractor.

Recent works have included:

- *Topographical and ecological surveys*
- *An archaeological survey undertaken by Oxford Archaeology revealing past Roman use of the site*
- *Groundworks for the delivery of the site compound offices/cabins*
- *Preparation works for a UK power networks diversion*

The Chelmsford North East Bypass – Section 1A, January 2025 newsletter contains further details. This can be found attached to this email and on our project webpage here: www.essexhighways.org/chelmsford-north-east-bypass

The benefit of CNEB to Broomfield, LW, GW, and other parishes, is that it should take traffic away from Essex Regiment Way, which will in turn take traffic away from the B1008 Broomfield main Road.

South Street

I spoke with the owner of the Old School House and they have trimmed their hedge to increase visibility splay from Hatchfields.

I also spoke with the owner of the White House hedge, and asked if he could trim it back and move the stones back a bit – to give some walking room. He has done some trimming back, but it’s not particularly consistent. It does provide more room.

Mill Lane – North End

I managed to get the flood /jetting team back to Mill Lane as well as the road repair team. I believe that they have sorted out all the drainage and tarmac repairs.

City Council Issues

Local Plan

The new Local plan went to the Policy Board 16th Jan for ratification to go out to consultation.

New housebuilding targets have been allocated by the Labour Govt, which increases the annual build rate from the current 913pa to 1,454 pa. Chelmsford had almost completed their plan so have taken advantage of the “transition” arrangements whereby they can complete the current process (rather than start again) on the basis that they can meet 80% of the new target. The updated plan commits to 1,210 dwellings pa, so that it gets a reduction on the new targets for the next 5 years.

In terms of my City Council ward, the only change is the addition of site 14b at Ford End (20 dwellings). The initial draft also had 14a (20 dwellings) at Back Lane but public feedback supported removing this.

In terms of my view as City Cllr, and County Cllr, I have noted some objections on social media. We do need to encourage people to directly log their views on the portal. Comments via social media, letters/emails to the Parish Council or City Cllr, do not get taken into consideration!

It is reassuring that the first round of consultation took account of the public and GWPC concerns about site 14a, and it was removed, thus evidencing that consultations do work and residents are listened to!

As City Cllr. I will try to represent the views of the residents, and what is best for them, but I will say this:

- There is a homeless crisis in Chelmsford and we need more dwellings – especially affordable ones
- Sites of >10 dwellings have to have 35% as affordable homes
- The general approach seems to be large sites near infrastructure, such as Beaulieu Park (10,000), Bloor (site north of Hospital approach - 532), Warren Farm (Writtle – 800) plus a few small sites such as FE.
- Personally, I think a bit of organic growth in places like FE, helps to maintain sustainability – e.g., the school is not yet single entry, there are families in FE who have contacted me who need to move to larger premises!

- Site 14b in FE offers the opportunity to get some traffic calming funded. Unfortunately, I have reached the conclusion that we will not get ECC Highways to allow and fund an Average Speed Camera (ASC) through Ford End. But we might get a planning condition associated with 14b to sanction it and fund it (it needs SERP ongoing contribution). This has been done in other places, so there is a precedent, and I have been discussing this with spatial planning and we are aligned. But there are no guarantees.
- In terms of vehicle movements, we know there are 13,000 a day in FE. The addition of 20 dwellings will not make much difference!

City Council are consulting on the:

- Chelmsford Local Plan - Pre-Submission (Regulation 19) Document
- Review of the Adopted Chelmsford Local Plan: Pre-Submission Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA).

City Council Planning prefer receiving comments online, using the specially designed Consultation Portal. Using the Consultation Portal helps to record comments accurately and process them quickly. Go to www.chelmsford.gov.uk/planningpolicyconsult to:

- Read the consultation documents
- Make your comments
- Sign up for alerts to future consultations.

Otherwise, representations should be made on a specially designed response form available online at www.chelmsford.gov.uk/lp-review or a paper copy can be provided by phoning (01245) 606330.

Brown Bins

I have confirmed that the new charging arrangement does not apply to allotments – i.e., brown bins will not be collected from allotments.

I also received a query from the Church. In that case, I can confirm that the Church can subscribe for a maximum 2 garden waste bins, this is allowed under paragraph 1 of schedule 1 of the Controlled Waste Regulations which classifies waste from a hereditament or premises exempt from local non-domestic rating under the provisions of paragraph 11 of Schedule 5 to the Local Government Finance Act 1988 as household waste.

Opus Retirement Village 23/01787/FUL

Erection of an Integrated Retirement Community (Use Class C2) comprising: a Village Care Centre, 58 bedroom care home, 45 care suites (comprising one and two bedrooms), 100 care apartments (comprising one and two bedrooms), wellness spa, open space and associated works including car parking, access, hard and soft landscaping and associated engineering works.

Have always see this an over-development of an area that is already subject to significant new developments. So, I was pleased when City Council refused it in Feb 2024 – it stated 11 reasons for such refusal.

The developer lodged an appeal which has now been decided and the appeal dismissed.

It appears that the Council chose not to defend a number of the reasons for refusal (the RfR) on the basis of information that was submitted after it made its decision and the planning obligation that was subsequently agreed during the course of the Inquiry. This led to the effective withdrawal of reasons 6-11 by the close of the Inquiry. However, main Issues 5 resulted in the refusal by the Appeal Inspector - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and its effect on the setting of two non-designated heritage assets comprising a World War II pillbox (the Pillbox) and Sparrowhawks Farm.

