



**REPORT of
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION**

to
COUNCIL (EXTRAORDINARY)
17 JUNE 2025

MALDON DISTRICT GROWTH OPTIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report set out for approval the Maldon District Council Local Development Plan (LDP) Review Options for Growth 2025 to enable further testing and modelling to be undertaken by the Council and partners.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Maldon District Council Local Development Plan Review Option for Growth **APPENDIX A** be approved to enable modelling and further testing on the following option for growth:

That strategic growth in the Local Development Plan Review should go into the Towns and large villages – these being Maldon, Heybridge, Burnham-on-Crouch, Southminster, Great Totham South, Tollesbury, Latchingdon, Tillingham, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Wickham Bishops and Mayland.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The LDP Review has a number of formal statutory stages to pass through over the next few years as set out in the Maldon District Local Development Scheme 2025-2029. This includes public and stakeholder consultation on draft versions of the LDP when it contains more detail of intent. The Maldon District LDP Issues and Options document in 2022 was the first formal, but non-statutory consultation in the plan-making process. Its main purpose was to ensure that the LDP had adequately scoped and identified the main issues for those parts of the LDP that the Council was reviewing and that all suitable alternative options for accommodating change were being considered. The consultation ran from 17 January to 14 March 2022. A total of 23,400 comments were received from 490 respondents including the public, businesses, landowners, developers and statutory consultees such as neighbouring authorities, Parish Councils, Essex County Council (ECC) and the NHS.
- 3.2 The Issues and Options document consultation presented seven high-level growth options for consultees to consider. These were:
- **Option 1** – Retain the option in the LDP approved in 2017 – focus growth in the settlements of Maldon / Heybridge and Burnham-on-Crouch.
 - **Option 2** – A strong focus on the towns and larger sustainable villages.
 - **Option 3** – Growth generally focused on the towns Maldon / Heybridge and Burnham-on-Crouch and all the large villages of the Settlement Pattern.

- **Option 4** – Pepper pot growth throughout the Settlement Pattern (Spread the growth across all the sustainable settlements in the district.)
- **Option 5** - Create a new satellite settlement or large urban extension bolted onto one of the towns, larger villages and/or settlement adjacent to the district boundary.
- **Option 6** - Focus growth in the north of the district to link into the service and facilities available in Tiptree, Witham and Maldon / Heybridge.
- **Option 7** – Focus growth along the rail line to Althorne, North Fambridge and Southminster.

3.3 Following consideration of the Issues and Options consultation feedback and an all Member Briefing Workshop on 12 July 2023, the seven options were distilled down to three options. These were approved by the Council on 14 September 2023 (Minute 247 refers). These were:

- Pursue further testing for Option 3 – Growth generally focused on the towns Maldon and Heybridge and Burnham-on-Crouch and all the large villages of the Settlement Pattern.
- Pursue further testing for Option 5 – A large urban extension bolted onto the existing settlements in the District and adjacent to the District boundary in combination with Option 3 - Growth generally focused on the towns Maldon and Heybridge and Burnham-on-Crouch and all the large villages of the Settlement Pattern.
- Pursue further testing for Option 7 - Focus growth along the rail line to Althorne, Burnham-on-Crouch, North Fambridge and Southminster in combination with Option 1 - Retain the option in the LDP approved in 2017 – focus growth in Maldon and Heybridge. (Burnham-on-Crouch is part of Option 7)

3.4 At the same Council meeting it was also agreed not to pursue the following two options:

- Option 4 – Pepper pot growth throughout the Settlement Pattern (Spread the growth across all the sustainable settlements in the District).
- Option 6 – Focus growth in the north of the district to link into the service and facilities available in Tiptree, Witham and Maldon and Heybridge.

3.5 **APPENDIX A** sets out the national policy changes that have occurred since 14th September 2023. The most fundamental change is the update to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 13 December 2024. The Government amended the methodology for the Standard Method which calculates the housing target for every relevant local authority in the country. This change has resulted in the amount of housing that the Council is going to have to consider in its Local Plan increasing from a pre-13 December 2024 need of 276 per annum to a mandatory target of 575 per annum. This change in the way the Standard Method is calculated took immediate effect.

3.6 The result of this change was a reduction of the District's Five-Year Housing Land Supply. It has dropped from 6.3 years to 2.7 years. It also meant that the Council has had to consider a significantly higher housing target for the LDP Review than it was previously considering. The table below sets out the approximate amount of housing units the Council will have to consider allocating land for. The details of this are set out in the paper attached at **APPENDIX A**.

Plan Period 2028 - 2043 15 x 575	8,625
5% buffer	431.25
Less Completions	0
Subtotal	9,056.25
Plus estimate of under supply from 2024	845.00
Less estimate of existing commitments	3,000.00
Sub Total to Allocate Land	6,901.25
Windfall sites over 1.0ha in size	825.00
Total	7,726.25

- 3.7 The paper at **APPENDIX A** works through the three previously approved options and for completeness it also revisits the two discounted options.
- 3.8 For the reasons set out in **APPENDIX A**, Options 5 and 7 have more significant constraints on them so that delivery of the District's higher growth target would be problematic, with a high risk of failure at a LDP Review examination on the grounds of soundness. This includes the lack of suitable land on which to deliver the housing target. This leaves the Council with Option 3 to test further this option is as follows.
- Pursue further testing for Option 3 – Growth generally focused on the towns Maldon and Heybridge and Burnham-on-Crouch and all the large villages of the Settlement Pattern.
- 3.9 The large villages would be Southminster, Great Totham South, Tollesbury, Latchingdon (though there are issues with the Waste Recycling Centre as set out in **APPENDIX A**), Tillingham, Tolleshunt D'Arcy, Wickham Bishops and Mayland.
- 3.10 In addition to Option 3, the Council will carry out further testing and highway modelling on the sites in the Parish of Stow Maries, but not in or adjacent to the settlement, which lie adjacent to South Woodham Ferrers in the neighbouring Chelmsford City area.
- 3.11 Further testing will involve carrying out highway modelling and in-depth testing of sites in respects of infrastructure considerations, working with statutory providers such as ECC Education, Essex Highways and the NHS to inform later land allocations.
- 3.12 Section 8 of the paper attached at **APPENDIX A** sets out that the Council has had to consider how much growth is required overall and what land is available in each settlement in order to meet the new higher housing target. This is a desk-top exercise to ensure that there is enough land to satisfy the requirement the LDP could set. It is not allocating any sites because the Council does not have enough information yet to definitively and robustly do that. It does however provide a figure for each settlement which can then be modelled and tested and can be used by the statutory providers as part of discussions. Without this, the LDP Review, in reality cannot move any further forward. The table below sets out the relevant figures in column A.

	Households 2021 Census	% of total (rounded)	Land available in these settlements	% All Land available (rounded)	Practical sites Column A	% Practical Sites (rounded)	Present Existing Commitments - dwellings with PP	% (rounded)	Total
Maldon	6,691	30%	2,908	31%	2,426	35%	594	30.5	3020
Heybridge	3,421	15%	309	3%	200	3%	282	4.9	482
Burnham-on-Crouch	3,968	18%	1,194	13%	749	11%	654	14.2	1403
Great Totham South	1,228	6%	184	2%	350	5%	992	13.6	1342
Latchingdon	569	3%	823	9%	0	0%	218	2.2	218
Mayland	1,529	7%	1,165	13%	811	12%	7	8.3	818
Southminster	1,936	9%	1,710	18%	1,504	22%	38	15.6	1542
Tolleshunt D'Arcy	455	2%	58	1%	58	1%	3	0.6	61
Tillingham	458	2%	114	1%	114	2%	36	1.5	150
Tollesbury	1,191	5%	741	8%	663	10%	45	7.2	708
Wickham Bishops	809	4%	90	1%	90	1%	56	1.5	146
Total	22,255	100	9,296	100%	6,965	100 (rounded)	2,925	100	9890

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 As set out in the paper attached to this report at **APPENDIX A**, it is considered that to move the LDP Review forward, there is only one option for growth for the District, that is.
- Option 3 – growth in the towns and large villages, plus the potential of bringing forward the site located adjacent to South Woodham Ferrers.
- 4.2 Therefore, it is recommended that the Council pursue testing of Option 3 with maximum housing number for each settlement as set out in the table above at paragraph 3.12.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2025 - 2028

5.1 Supporting our communities

- 5.1.1 Meeting the growth within the District ensures that the Council supports housing development to meet the need of residents in the most sustainable locations across the District.

5.2 Investing in our District

- 5.2.1 The LDP is not just about housing, the allocation and protection of employment land and positive employment policies may encourage economic growth within the District in the future.

5.3 Growing our economy

- 5.3.1 The housing sector provides jobs within the District and assists in supporting the local and wider economy. The LDP is not just about housing, the allocation and protection of employment land and positive employment policies may encourage economic growth within the District in the future.

5.4 **Protecting our environment**

- 5.4.1 The LDP will have policies for the protection of biodiversity and climate change will be at the heart of the plan. By placing growth in those places with the most services and facilities it will encourage walking and cycling and promote and increase the use and provision of public transport, which will help reduce the impacts of climate change.

5.5 **Delivering good quality services.**

- 5.5.1 An updated LDP will be used as the legal starting point in the determination of planning applications in the district and the enforcement of planning control.

6. **IMPLICATIONS**

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Having a clear methodology for the growth option helps the public understand the Council's rationale for decision making affecting housing in the planning process. Housing need and affordability is a fundamental issue and the review of the LDP can provide clearer evidence and policies to support that need.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – The LDP Review will have an Equalities Impact Assessment carried out on it as part of the legal duties of the Council in regard to Plan-Making.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – At the present time the LDP Review project is at risk of not being in compliance with its published Local Development Scheme (timetable), which was submitted to Government in March 2025. In order to mitigate this risk, it is important that an option for growth is chosen by the Council and that work on modelling and testing that option can commence as soon as possible.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The LDP Review is presently within budget.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (human)** – The LDP Review is primarily resourced through the Planning Policy and Implementation team.
- (v) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** – It is important that the Council, if it ceases to be and merges into a larger Unitary Authority that the new authority has robust evidence to use in LDP preparation. This will also support any future arrangements with the new Combined Mayoral Authority and the likely duties it will have for Strategic Planning.

Background Papers: None.

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