



REPORT of CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**to
COUNCIL (EXTRAORDINARY)
25 SEPTEMBER 2025**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION: CREATING A GREATER FUTURE FOR ESSEX FIVE UNITARY AUTHORITY BUSINESS CASE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To set out the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Five Unitary Authority (5UA) Business Case for Greater Essex, entitled “Creating a Local Future for Greater Essex”.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Members support the 5UA business case and its submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as part of the proposal for LGR across Greater Essex.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, wrote to all councils in two-tier areas and small neighbouring unitary authorities to formally invite proposals for LGR.
- 3.2 At the Council meeting on 25 February 2025, a report was presented which included 16 potential options for Greater Essex previously identified by Grant Thornton. The Grant Thornton evidence also showed that of the current 132 unitary councils, only 25% have populations above 330,000. At that meeting it was agreed that Maldon District Council (MDC) would in principle support the LGR 5UA (option ‘5.2’) model for Greater Essex (Minute No. 573 refers). A Devolution and LGR Member Working Group was formed to oversee and review the progress of both programmes of work. In addition to this, officers have provided two all Member briefings.
- 3.3 Greater Essex submitted an interim plan on 21 March 2025. On receiving feedback from government, local authorities began working together to prepare a formal LGR business case proposal.
- 3.4 On 2 May 2025 the Minister provided feedback to the interim plan. Subsequently MHCLG provided clarification on population sizes of future unitary authorities, stating that the initial 500,000 figure was set out as a guiding principle and not a target.
- 3.5 Using a shared evidence base local authorities across Greater Essex developed business cases for their preferred unitary authority models. A single evidence base was used to support each of the business case. Consultants were also commissioned to help each of the cases develop and to provide assurance and analysis of data.

- 3.6 On 3 June 2025 the minister outlined the Government's continued commitment to reorganising local government to create sustainable, efficient and streamlined unitary councils. The Minister emphasised the importance of empowering local authorities, improving public service outcomes, and resetting the relationship between central and local government. Following this, it was confirmed that all 21 two-tier areas that had submitted interim plans would receive proposal development contributions. Greater Essex was allocated £514, 318.
- 3.7 [The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(2025\)](#) was introduced to Parliament on 10 July 2025. The Bill aims to simplify the process to undertake reorganisation and provides measures and guidance for devolution, local government reorganisation and communities. This supports and enables both LGR and Devolution to progress concurrently. The Bill completed a second reading in the House of Commons on 2 September 2025, and it received 365 votes to 164.

4. PROGRESS TO DATE

- 4.1 Led by Southend City Council as the function of the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) councils have developed this proposal together in a transparent, evidence-led process. A task force of Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Castle Point, Chelmsford, Colchester, Maldon, Southend, Tendring, and Uttlesford Councils have worked collaboratively, hosting workshops and focus groups to test all options. Consultants Grant Thornton, Peopletoo and CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) were engaged to support detailed work in preparation of the 5UA business case. **APPENDIX 1** sets out how a common set of assumptions has been used to model the possible development of the three Unitary Authority (3UA), four Unitary Authority (4UA) and 5UA models. Of these, the 5UA model presents significant future advantages.

5. THE 5UA PROPOSAL

- 5.1 The 5UA Business Case meets all the following criteria set by government:
1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government;
 2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks;
 3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable service to citizens.
 4. Community Engagement - Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views;
 5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
 6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.
- 5.2 The 5UA model emerged as the best option outperforming alternatives on significant areas such as social care, local fit, service resilience, and strategic potential.

5.3 It provides:

- **The right scale** – Population sizes ranging from around 326,000 to 510,000, achieving economies of scale while maintaining strong resident and community representation;
- **Continuity of services** – The five proposed new councils will align with existing service footprints in their local areas, bringing together either two (Basildon and Thurrock) or three (all others) current districts, together with services currently provided by Essex County Council (ECC). This reduces the number of Councils being aggregated to a minimum, making future coherence quicker to deliver and reducing consolidation risks.
- **Lower transition risk:** Reduced disaggregation means smoother implementation and less disruption to residents;
- **Clear identity** – Each authority is centred around recognisable communities, helping sustain pride and engagement.
- **Ability to withstand financial shocks** – smaller councils create fewer layers between the 'frontline' and the 'centre'. Messages regarding risks and challenges can be shared more quickly, enabling shocks to be managed more effectively.

5.4 The size and geography of each of the five unitary authorities are set out below and on Page 9. of **APPENDIX 1**.

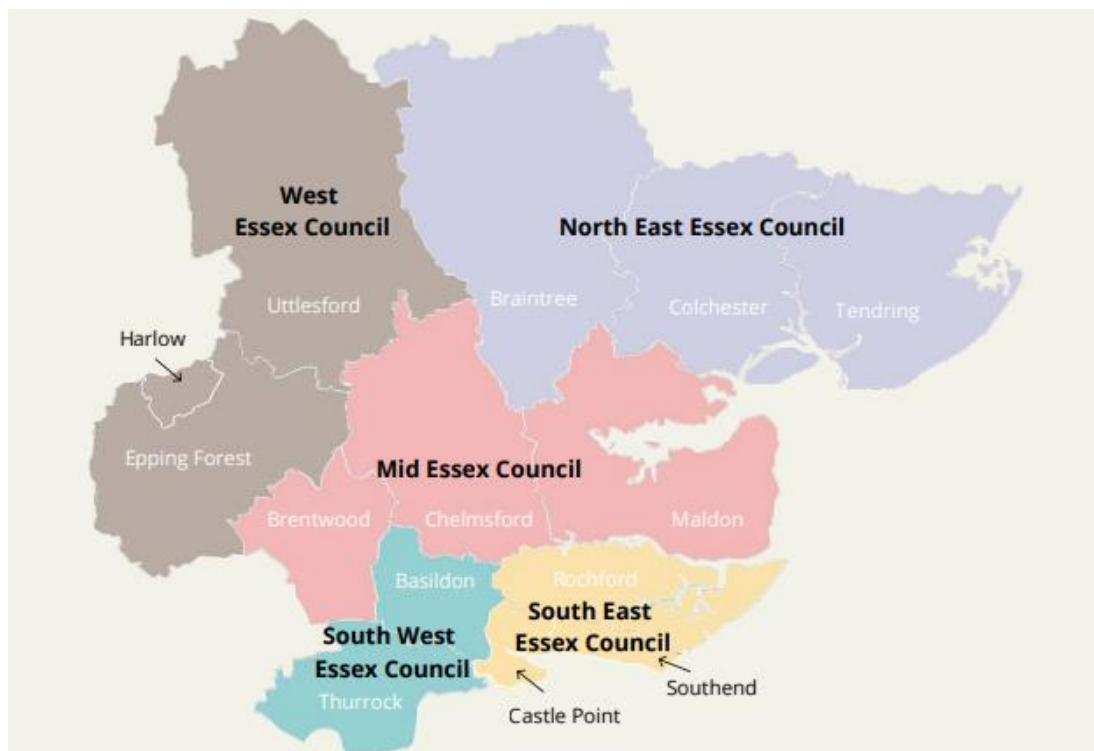


Figure 1 of this report --Page 9 of the 5UA proposal

- **Unitary 1: West Essex** is comprised of Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford with a total population of 325,609.
- **Unitary 2: North East Essex** is comprised of Braintree, Colchester and Tendring with a total population of 510,162.
- **Unitary 3: Mid Essex** is comprised of Brentwood, Chelmsford and Maldon with a total population of 331,757.

- **Unitary 4: South West Essex** is comprised of Basildon and Thurrock with a total population of 368,745.
- **Unitary 5: South East Essex** is comprised of Castle Point, Rochford and Southend with a total population of 360,317.

6. FIVE URBAN CENTRES

- 6.1 Each of the proposed five new unitary councils hosts a primary town or city with significant numbers of residents and commuters. Our data shows that, based on a 5UA model, many workers travel to work at the largest conurbation within their respective home unitary authority. This is demonstrated by the travel flow map below, showing the five major conurbations in Essex and these are likewise the five main centres people travel to for employment. Whilst Essex has retail hubs like Lakeside Thurrock, Chelmsford High Street and Braintree Shopping Village that draw visitors from across Greater Essex, the majority of leisure, shopping and retail activity takes place within the proposed unitary authority locality of our residents.
- 6.2 The 5UA model joins areas that are clearly linked in terms of how people live their lives and how local economies can generate sustainable growth. For example, the proposed Mid Essex Unitary Authority combines Brentwood, Chelmsford, and Maldon, which already share cultural closeness, complementary economies, and a flow of people moving between work, leisure, and retail.
- 6.3 The division of conurbations promotes collaboration between the five new councils, which will assist the mayor and promote the opportunities of devolution. Given the Government's clear direction that councils should not cut across 'historical identity', any decision to bring two or even three of the county's major conurbations into one unitary authority will alienate residents and risks having a negative impact on these areas. Having fewer, larger unitary authorities would be an artificial arrangement and is unlikely to effectively serve the diverse needs of all communities within those expanded areas. Areas that already suffer from a lack of connectivity, such as the Dengie Peninsula, or high levels of deprivation, such as Jaywick or Clacton's Pier Ward, will struggle for representation in any larger unitary authority spread over too wide a region.

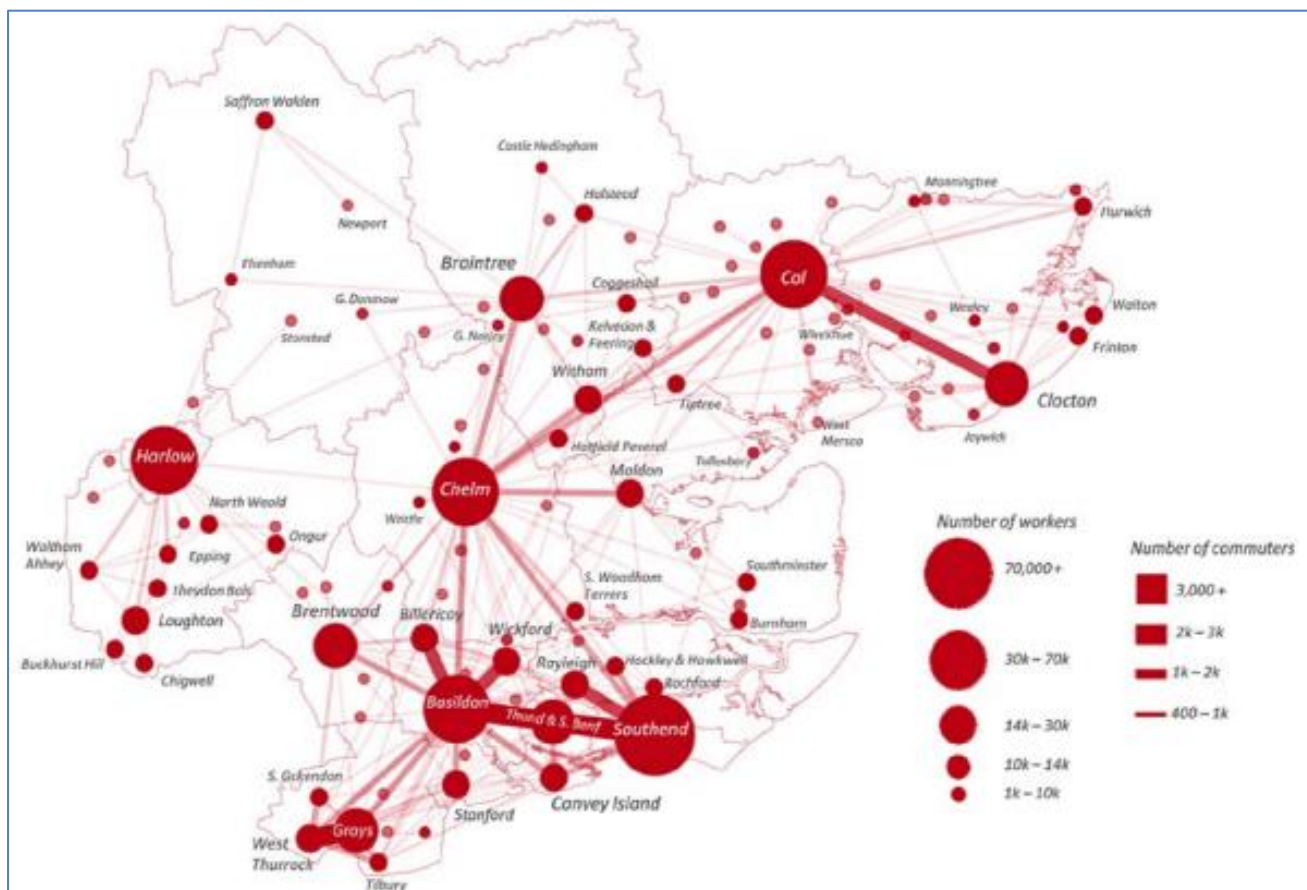


Figure 2 of this report - Essex travel flows (5UA business case p 51)

7. FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The Council meeting in February 2025 agreed an “in principle” preference for the 5UA model as this offered the opportunity for the greatest level of local responsiveness. It also highlighted a concern over the financial viability of that option. Work has therefore been progressed to address financial planning matters in general but also to consider the specific question of viability for the 5UA model.
- 7.2 Reports were commissioned from Grant Thornton to review the financial viability of a five unitary approach and consider the options for three or four unitary councils in the same way. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), who have already supported the County Councils Network with proposals on reorganisation nationally, were commissioned to help develop the case for a 3UA council model. They also compared their view of the 3UA council model with other models including the two, four, and five council proposals. The PwC and Grant Thornton assumptions differ significantly (and this is summarised further below). Other reports were commissioned from CIPFA, regarding overall indebtedness across Essex Councils, and specifically the position regarding debt held by Thurrock Council. Other firms were engaged by the leads for the two 4UA council models to help prepare those business cases.
- 7.3 Overall, the conclusion of this work is that there are no fundamental obstacles to reorganisation from a financial perspective. However, it also shows that some options under some scenarios offer more scope for cost efficiency (and so sustainability) in the future. This is set out in the paragraphs below.
- 7.4 Social care and family services have proven to be complex to disaggregate, as seen in previous rounds of LGR. These services are currently operated by Thurrock and

Southend as unitary councils and currently perform well, and additionally ECC as a county council. ECC operate a 4-area model, so there will be range of locally specific practices to be disaggregated and then consolidated into the new councils, under all LGR options proposed for Essex. Ensuring that the new councils start with operationally and financially sustainable social care finances will be a vital step in securing overall sustainability for them.

- 7.5 Consultants Grant Thornton used the analysis and national experience of Peopletoo and the Institute of Social Care Excellence to demonstrate that smaller unitary authorities deliver lower-cost services and larger one's experience diseconomies of scale. In the Greater Essex area, the benefit of removing diseconomies of scale are savings in a five unitary configuration of £79.3m for adult social care and £14.2m on children's social care. The fewer unitary authorities, the smaller the savings: for 3UAs a total social care savings would be £31.45m. This will be of significant interest to ministers when assessing all business cases.
- 7.6 Overall, the analysis for the 5UA model shows that it has the potential to deliver the highest annual savings at £134.696m, which is £28.7m more than the 4UA model (at £106.030m) and £56m more than the 3UA model (at £78.817m), as shown below. This is mainly due to an assumption that the new councils can move from current ECC average costs for care packages to the average currently reported by existing unitary councils with similar sized populations to the average for a three, four, or five council model.

	5 Unitaries	4 Unitaries	3 Unitaries
Ongoing Savings	£134.696m	£106.030m	£78.817m
Ongoing Costs	£30.365m	£27.329m	£24.212m
Total Savings	£104.331m	£78.701m	£54.605m
Pay Harmonisation +costs/-savings	-£0.504m	-£2.526m	+£28.804m
Risk Adjusted Total Net Savings	£104.835m	£81.227m	£25.801m

Figure 29: Ongoing annual savings.

Figure 3 of this report - 5UA benefits (5UA business case p173)

8. COMPARISON OF THE GRANT THORNTON AND PWC FINANCIAL MODELLING UNDERTAKEN

- 8.1 Overall, no clear financial obstacles were identified by independent financial experts for any of the proposed configurations (no 'red flags'). Equally, no specific issues were identified that made one solution specifically better than the others (no 'green flags'). However, it should be noted that the Grant Thornton financial analysis suggests that the proposal for the 5UA council model offers the greatest scope to improve social care cost efficiency.
- 8.2 The Grant Thornton modelling of the 5UA proposal identified possible social care savings of up to £90m+, as follows:
- 5UA: £90m+ per year (£133m years 1-5)
 - 4UA: £60m+ per year (£90m years 1-5)
 - 3UA: £30m+ per year (£43m years 1-5)

- 8.3 PwC's analysis of the options for two Unitary Authority (2UA), 3UA, 4UA, and 5UA proposals assume no social care savings opportunities exist, on the basis that ECC costs are 'already optimised'.
- 8.4 Other general financial issues to note are:
- **Debt and Borrowing:** Thurrock's 'non-asset backed debt' is included by based on a 50% to be addressed by Government, with the balance being attributed to Thurrock's successor council (based on the rationale of 'not 0%, but also not 100%'). Discussions with government will need to continue in parallel to the LGR process to determine the final position, bearing in mind the requirement that LGR proposals will need to be 'financially sustainable'. Much of the work to reduce the overall liability associated with the Thurrock debt has been completed already, meaning that the debt is no longer as problematic in its substance, just in its value.
 - **Housing functions** will have a greater profile post-LGR. There are no clear problems with the housing (Housing Revenue Account and General Fund) functions in Essex, but significant opportunities exist if housing functions can be more closely aligned to social care needs and other local community pressures.
 - **Reserves** modelling undertaken indicates that future allocations of reserves are likely to provide a sufficient starting point for future councils, but this is based on current assumptions and will need to be finalised further to the decision on the future model.
 - **ECC budget disaggregation.** Work has been undertaken to disaggregate the net £1.2bn of ECC budgets. The current position has a range of outcomes for local areas (including indicative surpluses and deficits). This aspect of reorganisation will require more detailed financial modelling to be undertaken once a formal decision is in place, to ensure that all the new councils have a starting point which presents the 'least worst' balance of estimated costs and benefits, especially for social care functions.
- 8.5 A summary of ten key differences between assumptions in the work carried out by Grant Thornton and PwC is as follows.
- 8.6 The views set out below are aligned to the observations and discussion of the Essex Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) (Section 151 (s151)) officer group. That group did not undertake to 'sign-off' any future model, but rather raised questions based on their knowledge as subject matter experts and ensure that those questions were answered.
- a. Grant Thornton assumes that savings could be delivered across all existing authorities; PwC assumes that savings will only be deliverable on existing district services with none achievable on county council spend. The Grant Thornton view is better evidenced in this respect.
 - b. Grant Thornton has spread the costs of transition; PwC has assumed that all transformation costs will be incurred very early. This would mean bringing together more than 600 separate systems across 15 different authorities, all within 12 months. Both assumptions are reasonable, but it not advisable to assume that new councils can be created and the systems and processes of their predecessors all brought together in a short timeframe. A long time for this is more reasonable.
 - c. Grant Thornton has assumed that savings will be delivered over a longer timescale. Initial savings from merging district authorities are modelled as

achieved by the end of year 2, but transformational savings start later - for social care in year 3 and highways, year 4. For adult social care, savings are not fully achieved until 6 years post-Vesting Day. PwC has assumed that all benefits will be delivered by the end of year 2, including realising savings from the sale of or repurposing of all assets. No authorities that have previously been through reorganisation have managed to deliver all savings within this timescale. Many haven't delivered their savings after several years. PwC also assumes a 2% reduction in ECC-related property costs, with non-ECC property reduced by between 12.5% (2UA) and 5% (5UA). GT have assumed a more consistent estimated level of savings from property rationalisation. The GT view is more credible.

- d. Grant Thornton has identified the risk of significant pay harmonisation costs, which rise with fewer unitary authorities. (Under equal pay, staff must be paid the same for jobs of equal value, and therefore the disparity in salaries between authorities will have to be removed.); PwC has not assumed any costs from pay harmonisation. They have assumed significant pay savings (which are higher in the 3UA model). PwC have stated that the ECC services 'will not experience a significant benefit from consolidation' (i.e. there are no staffing savings available from ECC service). It is not clear how this assumption has been tested. The GT view of staffing costs and benefits is more reasonable.
- e. Grant Thornton has assumed all models will result in ongoing disaggregation costs from splitting county services, on a sliding scale. PwC has assumed that moving to a 3UA model wouldn't result in any ongoing disaggregation costs because the 3UA model replicates the current position – that is, the new 3UA model will largely replicate the current position whereby ECC, Thurrock and Southend all have a 'full' management team and councillor representation including all upper tier functions. If a 4UA or 5UA model was adopted these would increase costs from that baseline. If a 2UA model was adopted, those costs would be reduced. The PwC assumption is not clear on how the current management arrangements in ECC, Thurrock and Southend accurately reflect the needs of the future councils, nor on how the management tiers outside the central management team would be affected. The GT assumption is more credible.
- f. Grant Thornton has adopted a bottom-up approach, using examples from existing unitary authorities across the country to determine their assumptions regarding structures. PwC has assumed staffing savings in districts but has based this assumption on the percentage of staff employed by ECC. As the county council takes a commissioning-based approach to delivering many of its services, its spend on staff could be significantly different to that spent by districts. The GT approach is preferable as it is based on current cost benchmarking rather than top-down assumptions which are often difficult to deliver in practice.
- g. Grant Thornton used national work undertaken by Peopletoo and the Institute of Social Care Excellence, which demonstrates that smaller unitary authorities deliver lower-cost services and larger authorities experience diseconomies of scale. In the Essex area, the benefit of removing diseconomies of scale are savings in a 5UA configuration of £79.3m for adult social care and £14.2m on children's social care. The fewer unitary authorities, the smaller the savings: for 3UA, total social care savings would be £31.45m. PwC's work assumes greater economies of scale are achievable through consolidation and rationalisation of third party spend in larger unitary councils. This is a difficult

area. The GT position identifies only the potential for savings, based on current actual benchmark data. The PwC position assumes that current contract management in all current councils is sub-optimal. It is unclear from the analysis if and when efficiencies could be achieved, and whether such savings would be cash releasing or not.

- h. Grant Thornton has assumed a transition cost for IT of £16.3m in all scenarios. PwC has assumed that transition costs on IT increase by £10m for each new unitary. Their report assumes this will cost £60m for five unitaries, and £40m for three unitaries (current spending is c£60m per year across all Essex councils). Many digital services professionals believe that merging more authorities into larger unitaries would actually cost more, given the complexity and number of systems that need to be merged. The PwC analysis does not include any offsetting benefits from new systems. The PwC assumption does seem credible based on current information.
- i. PwC has assumed that each additional unitary authority adds an extra £12.7m to annual running costs, but only £3.3m of this relates to management costs. A significant proportion of the calculations undertaken by PwC are not explained in detail (they part of their 'proprietary' approach to LGR).
- j. PwC has made an allowance for the closedown of existing authorities and assumed that the cost of this will be greater in a 5UA model. It is clear that the closedown of existing councils will entail some cost, but this is likely to be similar across all options (which necessarily require the closedown of 15 separate entities).

9. POLITICAL GOVERNANCE OF THE 5UA MODEL

- 9.1 Existing parish and town councils (nearly 300 across Essex) remain intact within the new authorities. The 5UA model centres each council on a coherent place or urban centre (Colchester, Chelmsford, Southend, Basildon, and Harlow).
- 9.2 The 5UA model uses the current ward structure as a basis for the proposal of elected Councillors within the new authority. Whereas the three unitary model uses the current County Council divisions.
- 9.3 The 5UA model provides for a total number of Councillors across the proposed five unitary authorities covering Greater Essex of 432. The 3UA providing for 284. This allows for one Councillor for 3,800 electorate in the 5UA model and one Councillor for 4,839 electorate in the 3UA.
- 9.4 Under the 5UA model the Maldon District will be allocated 17 seats across eight wards with two members for each ward and one ward with three seats due to its geographical size.
- 9.5 Under the three unitary model 12 seats will be allocated with each of the current county divisions having three seats.
- 9.6 The 5UA model reflects a smaller, community-focused model supporting greater democratic engagement and neighbourhood empowerment. By centring each council on a coherent place, the proposal respects Greater Essex's strong civic identity.

- 9.7 The final decision as to the size and boundaries of each electoral area will be decided by Ministers and will be set out in the Structural Change Order (stage 5 of the LGR).

10. CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Between 23 June and 20 July 2025, a comprehensive online survey was conducted to engage residents and stakeholders in the development of the 5UA proposal. This initiative was actively promoted through council websites across Essex and various social media channels to maximize outreach and participation.
- 10.2 Inclusive engagement opportunities have been a core part of the 5UA business case approach, with a dedicated online consultation seeking the views of residents and stakeholders on LGR and on the creation of five new unitary authorities for Greater Essex. In parallel, a pan-Essex telephone survey, an online feedback form for strategic stakeholders, and targeted online surveys and focus groups specifically designed for those directly impacted by disaggregated services were undertaken. This multifaceted approach has gathered valuable insights, enabling stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to the development and refinement of the proposal and ultimately leading to more effective and responsive local governance.
- 10.3 The public consultation on the proposal for a 5UA model in Greater Essex received over 7,300 responses, representing a wide range of views from across the county. Importantly, the 5UA public consultation was launched at a time when the other models on LGR being pursued in the region were yet to be finalised and publicly announced, and as such, the consultation represents residents' views on LGR and the 5UA model in isolation of information about alternative models being developed (such as the 3UA and 4UA models). This context is important to note in the analysis of the findings of the public consultation set out below.
- 10.4 Overall, respondents were cautious about LGR. Their concerns were focused on issues such as remoteness and the importance of preserving local identity, which the 5UA model seeks to address. Some 56% of respondents supported or were neutral to the proposal, and there was notable support in areas such as Southend-on-Sea (1,348 responses), Chelmsford (1,035 responses), and Castle Point (724 responses). 434 of Maldon district residents responded, 251 of those supported or were neutral about the 5UA model. Overall, supporters typically described the 5UA structure as "about the right size," citing the potential for improved service delivery, stronger accountability, and more efficient governance.
- 10.5 This insight from residents and stakeholders has been instrumental in shaping the proposal, enabling the authorities to address specific issues raised by residents and align the proposed changes with the community's needs and expectations. This collaborative approach not only fosters transparency but also strengthens the relationship between the councils and the communities they serve, ultimately leading to more informed and effective governance.

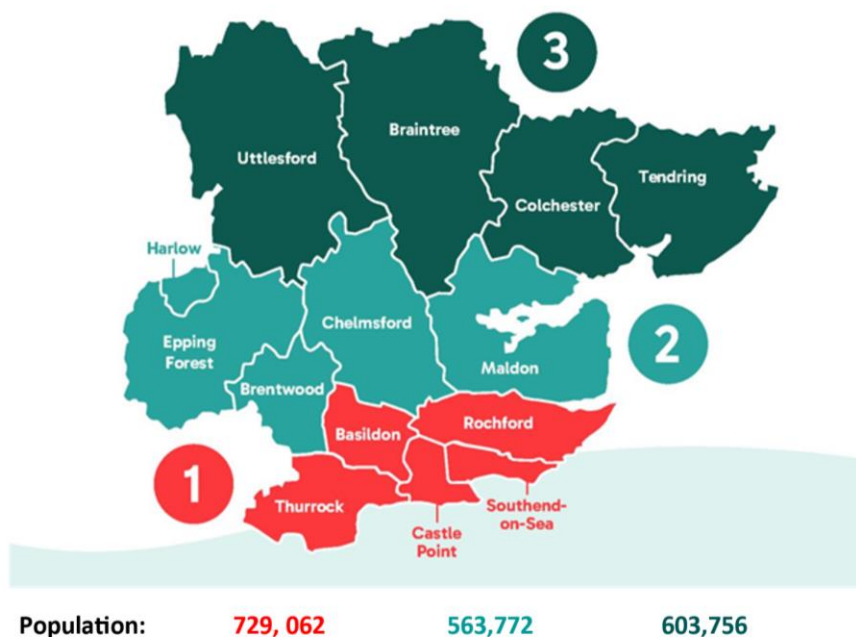
11. OTHER PROPOSALS TO BE CONSIDERED BY GOVERNMENT

- 11.1 In total, there are four models being submitted in the Greater Essex LGR proposal to government. These include a three unitary authority model led by Essex County Council putting MDC in a significantly larger authority spanning across the mid region of the county from Maldon to Harlow; a four unitary authority model led by Rochford District Council bringing Rochford into the Mid Essex area, and a further four unitary

authority model led by Thurrock which would see MDC form a unitary with Colchester and Tendring as the North East Essex Unitary. All these proposals are included as **APPENDICES 2, 3 and 4.**

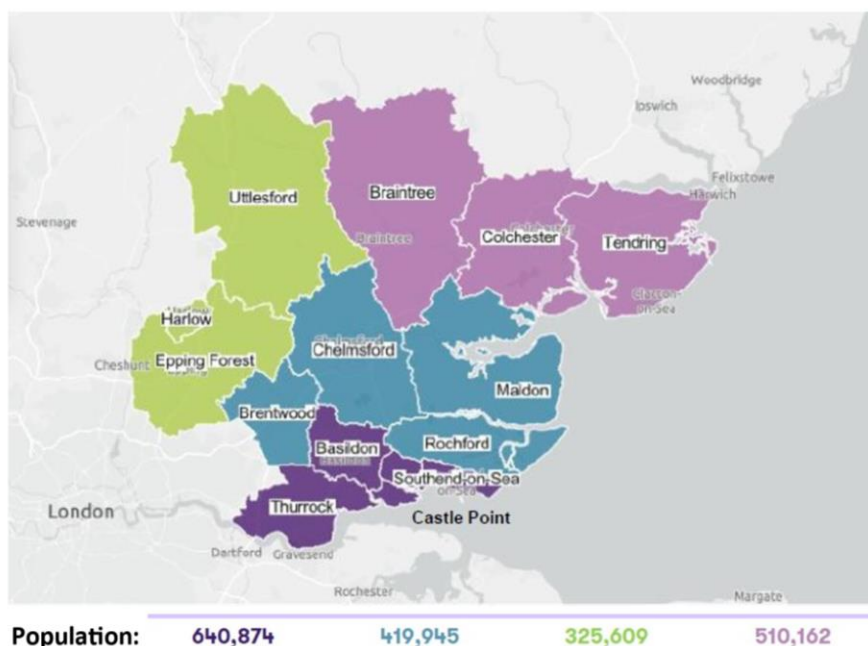
Essex County Council 3UA Model

- This would join **Maldon** with Brentwood, Chelmsford, Epping and Harlow to form a Central Essex Unitary Authority



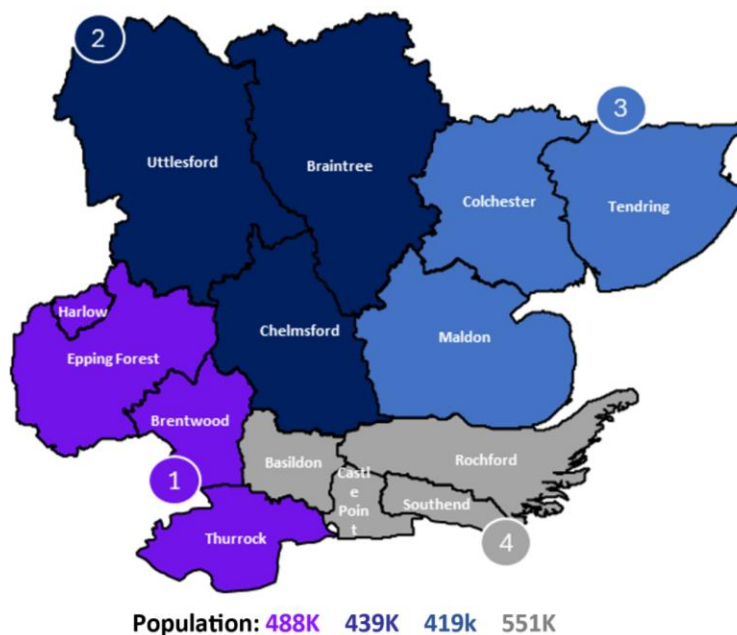
Rochford District Council 4UA Model

- This would join Rochford with Brentwood, Chelmsford and **Maldon** to form a Unitary Authority.



Thurrock Council 4UA Model

- This would join Colchester, Tendring and **Maldon** to form an East Essex Unitary Authority.



12. NEXT STEPS

- 12.1 The indicative Local Government Reorganisation for Greater Essex timeline, through to 2028 is as follows:

2025	September	Cabinet consent required to submit final LGR proposal Deadline for submission of final LGR proposal to government
	November	MHCLG statutory consultation on LGR proposals
2026	By March (TBC)	Announcement of new single tier local government arrangements in Greater Essex
2027	April	Creation of new shadow unitary authorities Elections to new shadow unitary authorities
2028	April	Vesting day for new unitary authorities created

(Figure 7: Timeline of LGR for Greater Essex, set by government)

- 12.2 The submission of the proposal to government is the second stage of a seven-stage process.

- 12.3 Stage 3 will see government carry out a statutory consultation in accordance with legislation.
- 12.4 At Stage 4 Ministers will decide, subject to parliamentary approval, which, if any proposal is to be implemented. In taking these decisions, Ministers will judge proposals in the round against the criteria. Ministers will have regard to all the representations that were received, including the consultation responses, and any other relevant information available to Ministers. The decision taken by Ministers will be subject to collective agreement across Government.
- 12.5 Stage 5 will allow for the preparation of the necessary legislation for the Structural Change Order (SCO). This establishes the single tier of local government and makes provision to abolish the predecessor councils.
- 12.6 Stage 6 is the transition period in preparedness for vesting day. The relevant transition body will focus on getting ready for go-live day for the new unitary authority, ensuring it is able to operate both safely and legally from day one.
- 12.7 Stage 7 The new unitary authority goes live. This is vesting day. A minimum of around a year is allowed to enable safe and legal transfer of key services from the point the legislation is made, to when the new unitary council(s) goes live. Elections to the new unitary councils, in the transition year ahead of vesting day, aid a safe and legal transition by ensuring those who will be responsible for governing the new authority(ies) are accountable for decisions on transition arrangements.
- 12.8 The final decision on a proposed restructure is made by the Secretary of State, and a reorganisation does not require the affected councils to give formal consent. There is no mechanism for the public to support or oppose reorganisation through a petition or a referendum (though referendums have been held in the past, mostly during the unitarisation activity that took place in the mid-2000s).

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 This is a large-scale reorganisation, affecting nearly 2m people and including net spending of £2bn.
- 13.2 Careful planning and sound delivery will be vital to ensure that these changes are effective.
- 13.3 Many decisions cannot be made yet but will be critical in determining the overall outcomes for local residents.
- 13.4 A range of different assumptions have been made in the different business cases, with key differences being highlighted around:
- Ability to be responsive to local communities;
 - Being based on existing travel patterns and functional geographies;
 - Possible benefits of future transformation under new councils;
 - Cost of transition from existing to new councils.
- 13.5 The 5UA model is the most balanced, deliverable and future-proof option for LGR in Greater Essex. It establishes right-sized councils that reflect natural communities and economic geographies, avoids the disruptive aggregation of existing upper-tier services, and supports greater democratic accountability. It also optimally aligns with

the geography of the proposed Mayoral Strategic Authority, facilitating joined-up regional planning while enabling tailored, place-based delivery. While requiring a modestly higher upfront investment, the 5UA model maximises the long-term benefits of local government reorganisation, offering more resilient public services, clearer leadership, and a strong foundation for sustainable growth across Greater Essex. This model best meets all six government criteria and enjoys strong support from councils and residents alike.

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

- 14.1 The Council will continue to deliver the priorities in the Corporate Plan throughout this stage of LGR. There will not be any impact until the transition phase.

15. IMPLICATIONS¹

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – None at this stage of the LGR process.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None at this stage of the LGR process.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – None at this stage of the LGR process.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – The Council has agreed a £500K reserve to support and enable the design and transition to LGR.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Currently utilising Business as Usual resource. Ongoing review.
- (vi) **Impact on Devolution / Local Government Reorganisation** – This is specific to the progress of LGR and aligns with the aims of Devolution.

Background Papers:

- [The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill \(2025\)](#)
 - **APPENDIX 1:** Creating a greater future for Essex: 5UA Model business case (Led by Southend City Council).
 - [Three Unitary Authority Business Case \(Led by Essex County Council\)*](#)
 - [Four Unitary Authority Business Case \(Rochford District's preferred model\)*](#)
 - [Four Unitary Authority Business Case \(Thurrock Council's preferred model\)*](#)
 - [Equality Analysis Greater Essex LGR 5UA proposal](#)
- *These documents are available on the [Essex LGR website](#).

Enquiries to:

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¹ Implications are relevant to Maldon District Council **only**, not to any successor council.