

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR) ESSEX CONSULTATION  
DRAFT RESPONSE**

Draft responses are highlighted in yellow

1. What is your name?
2. Are you responding as an individual or providing an official response on behalf of an organisation?  
Individual  
Official response on behalf of an organisation  
Member of Parliament
3. Have you been invited to respond as a named consultee?  
Yes  
No
4. In which council area is your address? (if you are responding as an individual this is your home address. If you are responding as an organisation this is your organisation address.)  
Essex County Council  
Southend-on-Sea City Council  
Thurrock Council  
Not in Essex, Southend-on-Sea or Thurrock
5. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please let us know the organisation's name:  
Maldon District Council
6. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please let us know your position within the organisation:  
Director of Legal and Governance
7. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please select the type of organisation from the options below:  
Business  
Education  
Health  
Local government - principal council within the invitation area  
Local government - neighbouring council  
Local government - parish/town council  
Local government - other  
Other public sector  
National body

Police and Fire  
Voluntary sector  
Other

8. What is your email address?

Email Address(Required) [legal.services@maldon.gov.uk](mailto:legal.services@maldon.gov.uk)

**For each of following questions below the options are**

**Strongly Agree**

**Somewhat agree**

**Neither agree or disagree**

**Somewhat disagree**

**Strongly disagree**

**Don't know**

**Consultation for 5 unitary councils:**

West: Uttlesford, Harlow, Epping Forest

North East: Braintree, Colchester, Tendring

Mid: Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon

South West: Thurrock, Basildon

South East: Castle Point, Southend, Rochford

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?  
**Strongly Agree**
2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?  
**Strongly Agree**
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?  
**Strongly Agree**
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in Best Value Intervention and in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?  
**Strongly Agree**
5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?  
**Strongly Agree**
6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?  
**Strongly Agree**
7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?  
**Strongly Agree**
8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?  
**Strongly Agree**

9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

The Five Unitary Model (5UA) meets all the criteria set by Government.

The 5UA model emerged as the best option outperforming alternatives on significant areas such as social care, local fit, service resilience, and strategic potential.

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.

This is the only model which has been widely consulted on. 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.

This model is also supported by the majority of local authorities within Essex. This proposal is the only one which meets the requirement of being supported by the largest cross party collective of local authorities within the Essex area.

The five unitary plan is based on independent analysis, including from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), whose analysis showed that authorities that serve a population of around 326,000 to 510,000 people are large enough to sustain specialist services but small enough to keep decision making and commissioning close to local need.

The five unitary model offers a rare opportunity to build a stronger, more preventative adult social care service – if the scale and structure is right. Authorities within the five unitary model could help shift adult social care towards prevention, independence and meaningful community-based support.

The District Councils Network (DCN) analysis of data covering existing English unitary councils shows the biggest do not outperform their smaller counterparts on either spending or service delivery. On some measures smaller councils outperform larger ones.

Their analysis leads to four key conclusions based on past performance of existing unitary councils:

1. There is little or no evidence to support a preference for large unitary councils and no evidence to support the 500k population level.
2. The bulk of the data analysed shows a non-existent or faint relationship between a council's population and its outcomes.
3. When there is an apparent correlation between population size and outcomes, it more often favours smaller councils.
4. The evidence gives no reason to assume that smaller unitary councils will be less efficient, sustainable or effective due to their size.

In light of this analysis, 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.

**Consultation for 3 unitary councils:**

North: Braintree, Colchester, Tendring, Uttlesford

Mid: Harlow, Epping Forest, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon

South: Thurrock, Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?  
**Strongly Disagree**
2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?  
**Strongly Disagree**
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?  
**Strongly Disagree**
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in Best Value Intervention and in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?  
**Strongly Disagree**
5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?  
**Strongly Disagree**
6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?  
**Strongly Disagree**
7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?  
**Strongly Disagree**
8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?  
**Strongly Disagree**
9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.  
**The 3 unitary model is not the best option for the population of Maldon.**  
**The 3 unitary model is not the right scale. The large size of each authority results in a greatly weakened resident and community representation. The size of the proposed areas would become some of the largest in the country.**

The high level of disaggregation for this model risks more complex implementation over the short time frame and may mean disruption to residents.

This groupings of authority areas have a less clear identity. Each authority area has a diverse range of communities with no clearly defined link between them. This does not allow residents to recognise the area of which they live and identify with the area in which they live. This will reduce pride and engagement with the new authority area.

There is no clear evidence that there will be any financial benefits or strengths in authorities of such a large size. Indeed, the authorities which consistently show best value for money are of a smaller size.

The District Councils Network (DCN) analysis of data covering existing English unitary councils shows the biggest do not outperform their smaller counterparts on either spending or service delivery.

Their analysis leads to four key conclusions based on past performance of existing unitary councils:

1. There is little or no evidence to support a preference for large unitary councils and no evidence to support the 500k population level.
2. The bulk of the data analysed shows a non-existent or faint relationship between a council's population and its outcomes.
3. When there is an apparent correlation between population size and outcomes, it more often favours smaller councils.

The 3 unitary model is unlikely to deliver any significant benefits to residents on the basis of size.

This proposal has limited support from other authorities in Greater Essex. This weakens the credibility of the proposal and fails to meet the expectation of a collective view.

### Consultation on the Proposal from Rochford District Council for 4 unitary councils:

North: Braintree, Colchester, Tendring

West: Epping Forest, Harlow, Uttlesford

Central: Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon, Rochford

South: Basildon, Castle Point, Southend, Thurrock

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?  
**Strongly Disagree**
2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?  
**Strongly Disagree**
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?  
**Strongly Disagree**
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in Best Value Intervention and in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?  
**Strongly Disagree**
5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?  
**Strongly Disagree**
6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?  
**Strongly Disagree**
7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?  
**Strongly Disagree**
8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?  
**Strongly Disagree**



9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

The 4 unitary model Rochford proposal is not the best option for the population of Maldon.

The split of areas within the model does not provide a logical grouping of district authority areas into the new proposed unitary authorities.

Placing Maldon District Council with Rochford District Council is not a natural fit. Rochford District Council is separated from the Maldon District area by the River Crouch. Maldon District Council has actively participated in North East Essex Groups and has an identity with these authorities of which Rochford is not one.

The groupings of areas have no clear identities. Each authority area has a diverse range of communities with no clearly defined link between them. This does not allow residents to recognise the area of which they live and identify with the area in which they live. This will reduce pride and engagement with the new authority area.

There is no clear evidence that there will be any financial benefits or strengths in authorities of such a large size. Indeed, the authorities which consistently show best value for money are of a smaller size.

The statutory criteria require proposals to demonstrate broad agreement among councils and reflect local needs informed by consultation.

### **Consultation on the Proposal from Thurrock Council for 4 unitary councils:**

West: Harlow, Epping Forest, Brentwood, Thurrock

North: Uttlesford, Braintree, Chelmsford

East: Maldon, Colchester, Tendring

South: Basildon, Castle Point, Southend, Rochford

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?  
**Strongly Disagree**
2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?  
**Strongly Disagree**
3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?  
**Strongly Disagree**
4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in Best Value Intervention and in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support?  
**Strongly Disagree**
5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?  
**Strongly Disagree**
6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?  
**Strongly Disagree**
7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements, for example, the establishment of a strategic authority?  
**Strongly Disagree**
8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?  
**Strongly Disagree**

9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer. You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on this proposal.

The 4 unitary model Thurrock proposal is not the best option for the population of Maldon.

The split of areas within the model does not provide a logical grouping of district authority areas into the new proposed unitary authorities.

Placing Maldon District Council with Tendring and Colchester is not a natural fit. While these are all coastal authorities the variance in communities does not allow for sense of community in the proposed new areas. Maldon District Council has strong links with Chelmsford City Council. As a neighbouring authority with whom Maldon shares its largest land boundary Chelmsford City Council fits naturally with Maldon District. This model removes this well-established connection.

There is no clear evidence that there will be any financial benefits or strengths in authorities of such a large size. Indeed, the authorities which consistently show best value for money are of a smaller size.

The statutory criteria require proposals to demonstrate broad agreement among councils and reflect local needs informed by consultation.