

BDC/018



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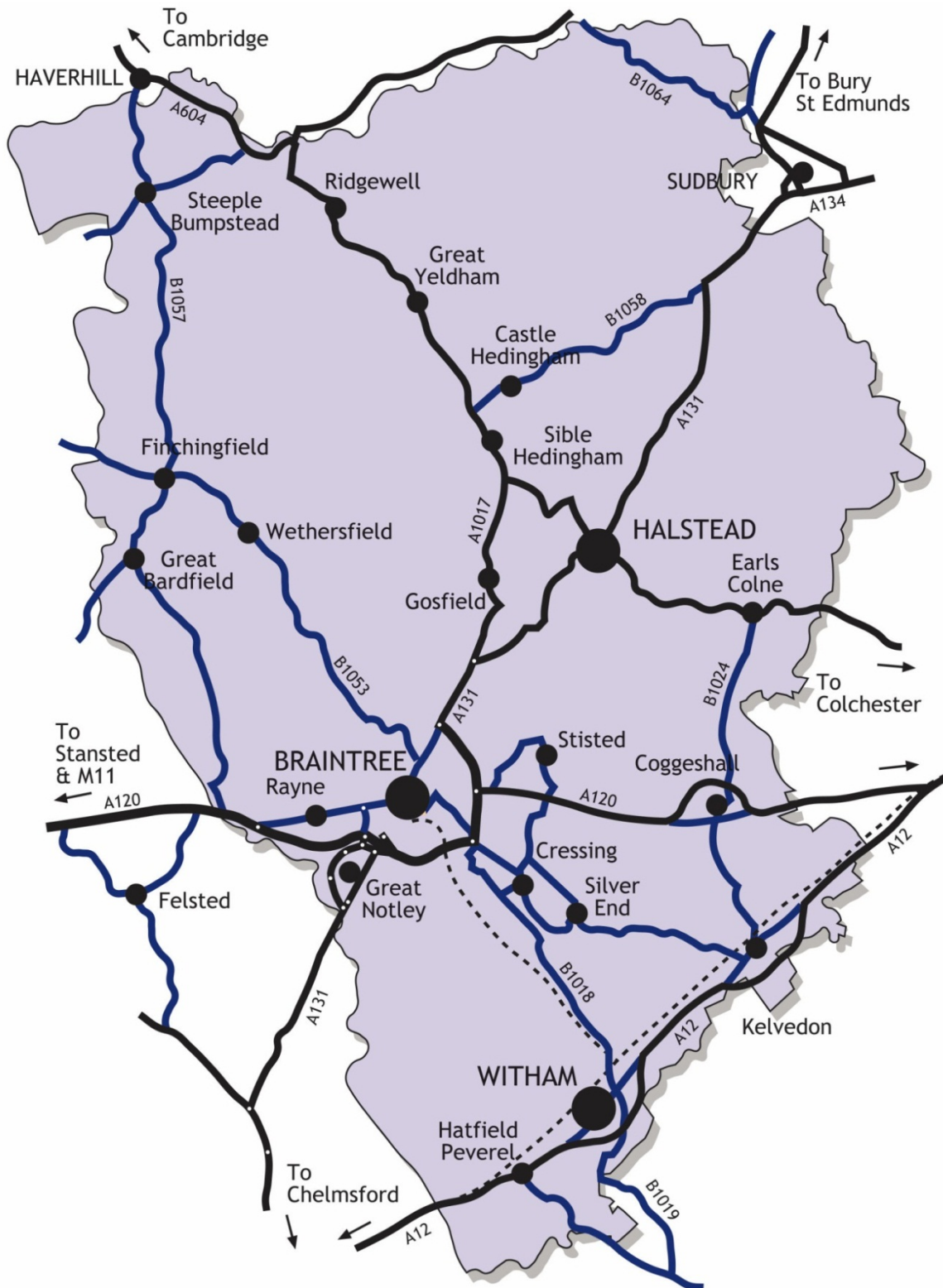
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Figure 1 District Map



INTRODUCTION

District Profile

Braintree is a large, mainly rural District that covers 612 square kilometres in north and mid Essex. The northern part of the District, extending to the Suffolk border, is fairly rural; the central and southern parts of the District lie in a key location between Stansted Airport, the East coast ports, and the key rail and road transport routes to London. The Braintree District is an advantageous place to live, located in an attractive natural setting and with many historic buildings throughout its towns and villages. The District also benefits from a Country Park at Great Notley and river walks, local nature reserves and local wildlife sites, including ancient woodland across the area.



The largest town is Braintree, followed by Witham and Halstead. In addition to the local town centre facilities, the development of the Freeport outlet shopping village and nearby leisure centre has provided an attraction serving the District and beyond. Towns and villages in the A12 and A120 corridors are attractive to commuters. Neighbouring Chelmsford and Colchester are important sources of employment for people who live in Braintree District, as is London.

Braintree District has been one of the fastest growing areas in the country over the past decade. The population of the District is currently approximately 150,000 and is projected to rise substantially by 2033. As life expectancy increases, the age structure is expected to change, with a marked increase in the number and proportion of the population who will be aged 65 and over. The number of one-person households is also expected to increase.

The Braintree District has a wide employment base of mainly small and medium sized businesses. In 2011, approximately 58,000 residents worked within the District, 15,000 travelled into the District to work, and 32,000 travelled from the District to work in the major centres of London, Chelmsford and Colchester. Unemployment and youth employment rates have fallen since last year and are below the national average.

The Council has invested in new and enhanced leisure facilities in the District. In 2014 a new leisure centre with swimming pool and gym opened in Witham, and facilities at Braintree Sport & Health Club and at Braintree Swimming & Fitness were expanded and enhanced. Outdoor gyms have also been provided in Braintree and Witham.

The Council is promoting the Livewell campaign, working together with partner agencies to reduce levels of adult obesity and reduce numbers of hip fractures in the over 65s. Braintree District has the highest rate of excess winter deaths out of all the Districts in Essex. Levels of adult obesity in the District are currently higher than the national average, and levels of physical activity amongst adult residents are lower than the national average and the lowest in Essex.



Future Challenges

The Plan will set out the basis for working with partners to provide for future local needs for homes, employment, and business sites, whilst protecting the most valuable countryside and maintaining a high quality of life. The scale of past population growth has proved a challenge for services such as health and education; the rapid increase in the rate of growth that is expected to be called for in the future is likely to provide an even greater challenge to services for the population of the District.

The Council is committed to encouraging employment development and inward investment to support prosperity and achieve a better balance between homes and employment. More employment, particularly with a good range of jobs, can help to reduce the increase out-commuting and reduce pressure on strategic roads and rail services.

The Council is keen to work with partners to improve educational attainment and encourage skills development in the District.

One of the District's key objectives will be to demonstrate that the new Plan can achieve and maintain a supply of readily available development sites for new homes, meeting a much higher target than in the past.

As well as the overall level of need for new homes, the Plan will need to consider the need for specialist homes, services and facilities to support the increasing number of elderly people expected to be living in the District in the future.

Providing the necessary infrastructure, particularly for travel but also other things such as telecommunications, high speed broadband, utilities supplies and community services (health, education, leisure, business/employment, shopping facilities) are all likely to be a crucial challenge in the Plan.



Why a new Local Plan is required

The Council is working on a new long term strategy for the District which will be called the Local Plan. The Council needs to draw up a clear and up to date Local Plan that meets local development needs and reflects the views of local people on how they wish their area to develop.

The Government's national planning policy - set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and supporting guidance - requires local planning authorities to significantly boost the supply of new homes, building the homes communities want and need. The Council is considering a range of requirements for the number of new homes for Braintree District; at this stage it is expected that the District will need to accommodate an average of between 750 and 950 homes per year between 2014 and 2033.

The new Local Plan will need to plan for this growth to be supported by infrastructure, jobs and community facilities. Promoting economic growth and prosperity in the District will be a key part of the Plan, including identifying land to support new employment areas.

The Council will work with local communities, parish and town councils and developers to plan and assist in the building of better places for everyone to live. The Council is working with neighbouring local authorities to identify cross-boundary issues and to promote the necessary infrastructure improvements.



Have your say...

We invite your comments on this document, especially in response to issues which have been highlighted here. The Council encourages people to submit comments online. Although representations can be made and submitted using the form provided, if you register to submit comments online, you can update your own contact details as needed, and you will receive e-mails informing you when new documents are available for consultation. The consultation portal can be found at:

<http://braintree-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/>

You will be asked to register or login before being able to comment on the documents listed below but you can read the documents without registering. To register please click on the 'Register' link within the 'Login' section. The portal is also used to maintain the mailing list.

To join the Local Plan mailing list please register using the 'Register' link within the 'Login' section.

Written comments should be sent to:

Planning Policy
Braintree District Council
Causeway House
Braintree
Essex
CM7 9HB

All comments should be received by 5pm on the 6th March 2015

If you have any questions about the consultation please contact the Planning Policy team on 01376 552525

or e-mail localplan@braintree.gov.uk

If you would like this document in an alternative format such as large print, braille or another language then please contact the Planning Policy team. A fully accessible version of the document can be found on our website at www.braintree.gov.uk



What happens next?

This is the first stage in developing a new Local Plan for Braintree District. The Council will use the comments and suggestions that it receives on this document to help it to develop preferred policy options in a draft plan. That draft plan will be the subject of the next stage of public consultation in Autumn 2015 before it is formally submitted to the Secretary of State.

The key stages in the Local Plan preparation, and the planned timetable, are:

- 1. Issues and Scope:** to consider what the main aims and objectives are going to be for the Local Plan (January 2015)
- 2. Draft Local Plan:** Provides a first draft of the Plan, with specific policy proposals and sites for particular uses, including areas identified for future new homes; employment and green space (consultation on this stage late 2015)
- 3. Submission Local Plan:** Takes into account changes made following consultation on the Draft Local Plan. This is the version of the Plan that will be formally submitted to the Secretary of State and Planning Inspector (consultation on this stage Spring 2016, followed by submission Summer 2016)
- 4. Examination in Public:** The Inspector examines the “soundness” of the Plan in a series of round table discussions on different issues, giving individuals and organisations the opportunity to challenge or support the Plan (probably Autumn/Winter 2016)
- 5. Adoption:** if the Planning Inspector is content that the Plan is sound, then the Council can adopt the Plan, taking on board any relevant recommendations from the Inspector to change the Plan. The Council is aiming for the new Local Plan to be adopted in early 2017.

A PROSPEROUS DISTRICT

A Strong Economy



The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth and should plan pro-actively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century.

Situated between the major urban centres of Chelmsford and Colchester, and close to Cambridge and the international transport hubs of London Stansted Airport and the Haven ports, Braintree District is well located to support business growth and inward investment. London is 45 minutes away by rail. However, these good connections mean that the Braintree District must compete with these centres for employees, and out-commuting levels are high. Braintree District has a wide employment base with a large number of small and medium sized businesses working in a wide variety of sectors. Major employment areas are located around the urban areas of Braintree, Witham and Halstead, but rural employment such as that based around farming and agriculture also play an important part in the economy.

The Council has already approved two major new employment sites for development: one at 'Eastlink' off the A131 near Great Notley, and an expansion to the Springwood Drive industrial estate in Braintree. The development of these sites will be progressing, but it will not be enough to provide the necessary number of jobs over the Plan period and major new sites will need to be found in the right locations to attract inward investment. The Plan will need to recognise and provide for changing ways of working resulting from technological progress and flexible working.

Having enough schools is very important. A well-educated and qualified population is good for the economic health and attractiveness of the District for new and existing businesses.

It is important that new development has provision for education, school places, and when necessary, the identification of new sites for schools. Protecting existing schools and nurseries is also necessary. The Council will support the re-modelling of and expansion of schools to meet local school needs, provided enough play grounds and fields are left.

The quality of schooling is also vital, and it is important to ensure that the people of the District have the opportunity to meet their full potential. A range of educational opportunities should be provided including practical vocational training and on the job training such as apprenticeships.

Education is a continuing process and opportunities should be available for all age groups to expand their skills and knowledge base.

Infrastructure constraints leading to congestion on the main road network, existing rail services, and poor access in rural areas to high speed and reliable broadband all have the potential to be barriers to economic growth. Our approach to addressing these issues is set out under the Transport and Infrastructure theme.

Issues:

- How can we ensure that there is enough employment land in the right places, serving different business needs?
- We need to strike a balance between supporting rural employment and protecting the countryside;
- It is unlikely that the number of new jobs needed will be able to be met by the growth of existing companies in the District;
- The District has high levels of out-commuting with locations such as London, Colchester, Chelmsford and Stansted Airport being key draws for residents in the District.
- The increasing requirements for homeworking need to be accommodated
- The rural areas and heritage assets in the District can act as a magnet for visitors but this can bring problems with car parking, travel and pressure on local facilities.
- How do we ensure sufficient quality school places?
- Providing education opportunities for adults.

Are these the issues that impact upon the District economy; are there any other issues that we need to include?

Options:

- Attract new business and jobs to the area;
- Support the improvement, intensification and re-use of existing employment sites that are fit for purpose and identify appropriate alternative uses for those which are not;
- Locate new employment sites close to existing employment areas;
- Locate major new employment sites in the rural areas;
- Locate new employment sites on the strategic road and rail network;
- Enable the development of rural businesses located in the countryside;
- Support new facilities and attractions to promote tourism in the District;
- Develop employment sites to support growing business.

Is this a suitable range of options to address the issues raised; are there any other options we should consider?

Shops and Services



The District is likely to need to increase its retail provision to meet the demands from new housing and employment growth.

Evidence will have to be collected showing what the likely new retail requirement will be for new food shops and other retail and leisure uses. The Plan needs to recognise and react to the changing ways in which the public do their shopping and use their town centres.

Under national policy we are required to make provision for the District's identified need for main town centre uses which includes, amongst other uses, retail, restaurants, offices and cultural tourism development.

The three main towns of Braintree, Halstead and Witham offer residents shopping, leisure and work opportunities, provide a wide variety of services and act as service centres for people living outside of the main towns in surrounding rural areas. Larger villages such as Coggeshall, Hatfield Peverel, Silver End, Sible Hedingham, Earls Colne and Kelvedon act as centres for surrounding smaller villages and offer smaller scale shops and services.

Braintree, Witham, Halstead and Coggeshall all have weekly markets. These markets host local traders selling a range of goods and services. Additional markets are held throughout the year, such as at Christmas, and the towns also host specialist visiting markets.

The District is well positioned between the larger centres at Chelmsford and Colchester which are easily accessible and offer residents a wide range of shopping choices. Braintree is home to the Freeport Outlet Centre which attracts customers from all over the District as well as the wider region and London.

In recent years Braintree District Council and its partners have embarked upon the "Backing Our Towns" programme of improvements to town centres, and Braintree has also been designated a Portas Pilot town. Innovative steps have been taken to improve the retail offer in these centres, as well as encouraging independent retailers through initiatives such as the provision of pop-up shops and market stalls, and reduced parking charges.



Issues:

- Providing enough shops, offices, recreational, tourism, and heritage facilities;
- Getting more people shopping locally;
- How do existing centres need to develop to meet the needs of a growing and changing population;
- Our approach to town retailing;
- Protecting locally important shops and facilities;
- Encouraging mixed use development;
- Supporting rural shops and services;
- Improving hotel accommodation and tourist facilities;
- Making sure the centres achieve their full potential;
- What role should markets play in the future?

Are these the issues that impact upon shopping and services; are there are other issues that we need to include?

Options:

- To protect and enhance town and local centres as the main location for main town centre uses and markets;
- Allocate sites and regeneration areas within town centre for main town centre uses or expand the town centres to meet identified retail need;
- Increase the out of town provision retail provision;
- Keep the town centre attractive to all users and visitors in the day and evening through public realm and other initiatives;
- Set out policies to encourage living and working in town centres?

Is this a suitable range of options to address the issues raised; are there any other options we should consider?

Homes

Local authorities are required to boost significantly their supply of housing by ensuring that they meet their full assessed needs for housing and provide a supply of specific sites where development will take place. National policy also sets out that a wide choice of high quality homes should be delivered which widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities.



Braintree District will need to continue to grow over the next 15 years to meet the housing and employment needs of an expanding population. There is a need to build high quality homes in attractive neighbourhoods that offer good connectivity to places where people work and access to a wide range of community facilities such as shops, schools and open space.

We are also required by Government to allocate sites to meet the needs of Gypsy and Travellers in the District, and this will need to be recognised in the Local Plan.

Currently there are 62,704 homes in the District, accommodating 147,053 people (2011 census). Government projections show that the District population will continue to rise over the next 15 years. The population is growing as a result of longer life expectancy and greater numbers of people moving into the District than moving out of it. In addition more people are living on their own, or in smaller groups than ever before.

The adopted Core Strategy set an annual average target of 272 new homes to be built in the District. Recent research has indicated that between 750 and 950 new homes will be required to be built every year to 2033 to meet the needs of the District's growing population. In order to accommodate these homes major access and infrastructure improvements will be required in the District as well as high quality employment opportunities for new and existing residents. How these will be provided is set out in other sections of this consultation document.

House prices in Braintree District vary and we need to ensure that we are providing a good mix of all sizes and types of houses to meet the needs of all new and existing residents and that there are sufficient affordable housing options available. We will also need to consider the need for specialist homes and those that can be adapted to facilitate people living independently for longer.



Issues:

- Large numbers of new homes are required in the District to support the growing population;
- The District may not have enough brownfield sites (those where buildings have previously been located) to accommodate the new homes that need to be provided;
- The Council must balance new homes with protection of the natural and historic environment;
- Everyone should have the opportunity for a decent home, which they can afford;
- New Gypsy and Traveller provision needs to be made in the District at appropriate locations.

Are these the issues that impact upon where new homes should be built; are there any other issues that we need to include?

Options

- New homes should be focused on the existing towns and larger villages;
- New homes should be built in one or more new villages;
- New homes should be dispersed between all areas of the District;
- New homes should be built in areas where they can provide funding for major infrastructure projects such as new roads;
- New homes should be built on the existing public transport/rail network to encourage sustainable travel;
- The District will ensure that land is available in the District for people to build their own homes;
- Bring forward sites for affordable housing only;
- Include some market housing on affordable housing exception sites in rural areas to ensure they are delivered;
- The criteria for identifying new Gypsy and Traveller pitches in policy CS3 of the Core Strategy should be retained;

Is this a suitable range of options to address the issues raised; are there any other options we should consider?

Transport and Infrastructure

National policy requires the transport system to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes such as buses and cycling. However it is also recognised that different policies and solutions will be necessary in different areas.



The NPPF also indicates how high quality communications infrastructure is crucial for sustainable growth.

The Braintree District is a large and substantially rural District in which just over half the residents live in the three main urban centres of Braintree, Halstead and Witham, with the remainder in rural areas. As such, car ownership in the District is high, and cars are the primary means of transport for many residents.

There are particular stretches of roads or junctions in the District that can become congested, especially at peak times when people are travelling to and from school or work, and we are working on solutions to this congestion, including new roads or changes to junction arrangements as appropriate. Traffic growth can also occur when new homes or offices are built in neighbouring areas, and councils must work together to minimise these impacts on all communities. Transport and congestion can have a negative impact on air quality and this will need to be carefully monitored and managed. Encouraging alternative approaches to private vehicle travel such as electric cars and facilitating the infrastructure required such as charging points may assist in reducing harmful emissions which can impact on health.

Public transport networks in the towns are adequate during the day on weekdays but during the evening and in rural areas the availability of public transport can be limited. With the increasing elderly population in the District, we need to ensure that public transport is accessible and available to all, providing access to key facilities. Fragmented cycleway networks are available in mainly Witham and Braintree.

Essex County Council is responsible for roads and public transport in the District, whilst the Highways Agency is responsible for the major routes of the A120 and the A12. Braintree District Council has a good relationship with these organisations and will need to continue to work in partnership with them and our neighbouring authorities to deliver the required projects.

The availability of high speed and reliable broadband, particularly in the rural parts of the District is a key factor in unlocking new development opportunities and ensuring that people can access services online and work from home.

Other infrastructure requirements for new developments include the availability of utilities such as telecommunications, electricity, gas, water and waste water treatment facilities and the Council will need to work with the organisations responsible for delivering this essential infrastructure in the District.

The District has already identified a number of key priorities in relation to infrastructure improvement in the District. These are:

- To improve connectivity between Braintree and Colchester; To secure access improvements into Braintree town centre from the A120 to relieve congestion;
- To secure junction improvements on the A12 and other main roads to reduce congestion;
- To lobby to secure funding for, and the delivery of, the Braintree rail loop to substantially improve access to London;

- Work with partners to improve express public transport links between Stansted Airport, Braintree, Witham and the rail network;
- Secure the earliest availability for universal broadband coverage and fastest connection speeds for all existing and new developments in the District.

Issues:

- To ensure that road infrastructure is not a barrier to providing new jobs and homes in the District;
- Public transport links, especially in rural areas and at evenings and weekends are limited;
- How do we plan development to reduce the need to travel by private car?
- Ensuring that key facilities are easily accessible by public transport, particularly for the elderly population;
- Is there sufficient car parking available to meet demand?
- New and existing developments need to be served by a high speed reliable broadband service which is not a barrier to economic growth;
- Essential infrastructure and services must be provided to meet the needs of new and existing residents;
- The Council does not have control over funding or work programmes and therefore must work with partners to deliver many of these schemes.

Are these the issues that impact upon transport and infrastructure; are there any other issues to include?

Options:

- Encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport by providing or facilitating the provision of facilities in new and existing developments;
- Provide public transport that is accessible for the elderly population for example, bus stops near retirement homes/care homes;
- Promote mixed use development where homes, community facilities and jobs are all located in close proximity to each other;
- Develop sites in clusters of uses which are linked via high quality public transport and road infrastructure;
- Developing safe cycle/footpaths which provide connections to facilities;
- Develop a tariff approach where each new home must pay a set amount towards improving infrastructure;
- Continue to negotiate contributions to infrastructure on a site by site basis.

Is this a suitable range of options to address the issues raised; are there any other options we should consider?



CREATING BETTER PLACES

Community Facilities

The Council, with the help of the community, has to plan positively for the provision of community facilities and other local services to make sure people don't have to travel too far to access services they need.

We should stop the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly when this reduces the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs. We should also ensure that shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable and retained for the benefit of the community. We should ensure a joined up approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.



Community facilities are things like local shops, public houses, sports venues, places of worship, libraries and other meeting places. Residents can nominate assets of community value, giving them the opportunity to protect and retain those facilities that they consider to be the most important locally.

Braintree Museum, the Warner Textile Archive and cultural and heritage facilities throughout the area, play an important role in the promotion of the cultural heritage and identity of the District.

The District has many leisure facilities such as the new Witham Leisure Centre and the Braintree Swimming & Fitness centre which has recently expanded and now offers gym facilities. Halstead is also well served and has a leisure centre offering a 25m swimming pool as well as gym facilities. These centres are a great community asset and will continue to provide a wealth of opportunities for residents to stay fit and active.

It also has many open air sports and leisure facilities, playing fields, parks and gardens, play areas, river walks and other open space for formal and informal recreation.

Community Orchards and Woodlands can deliver social, economic and health benefits and people can volunteer to assist in their maintenance. They can also be used as an educational resource for local schools. Orchards and woodlands help the natural environment and provide open space provision. They have significant wildlife value, with a variety of flora and fauna.

It is also necessary to protect existing cemeteries and, if needed, provide new cemeteries.

Issues:

- Enabling new community facilities and their ongoing cost and local management;
- Ensuring accessible services which are accessible by a range of transport options;
- Close working with service providers;
- What is the likely demand for cemetery provision, will we need cemeteries in future?
- How do we best protect local facilities?
- Closure of local facilities such as pubs in rural and urban areas.

Are these the issues that impact upon community facilities; are there any other issues that we need to include?

Options:

- Provide and maintain new community facilities to allow those uses to continue;
- Make provision for multi-use buildings which can meet a range of community needs.

Is this a suitable range of options to address the issues raised; are there any other options we should consider?

Creating high quality spaces

Braintree District is facing challenges in providing significantly increased housing, employment and retail. Without proper consideration this growth could have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the District unless due consideration is given to design, landscape and heritage issues.

The NPPF states that local planning authorities should set in their Local Plan a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment and also emphasises the importance of good design, which is indistinguishable from good planning, and is a key aspect of sustainable development.

Braintree District has many different towns and villages, each of which has its own unique character and appearance. The District is home to the village of Silver End, known for its modern movement housing, and Great Notley garden village. Coggeshall is a late medieval cloth town with many historic timber-framed buildings, and Finchingfield received national exposure as the picturesque backdrop to 2014's Tour de France route. The larger market towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead all have historic centres and conservation areas, as do many other villages within the District.

The 2013 National Heritage List for England shows that the District has 3230 heritage assets including 3184 listed buildings of all grades, 37 Conservation Areas, 40 scheduled Ancient Monuments and 8 Historic Parks and Gardens. This is the second highest number of heritage assets in Essex.

The Braintree District is situated within a rich and varied historic environment, with evidence of human activity dating back as far as the Palaeolithic period, some 10,000 years ago. As such, it is important to assess areas within the District for their archaeological potential, as and when opportunities arise to do so. The Historic Environment Record contains 6622 records relating to the historic environment in Braintree District. The majority of archaeological sites are not designated and it is recognised that many areas of a similar significance to designated assets are potentially present.

It is important that when any development is proposed it must take account of the historic character of the area, and of any potential impact upon heritage assets. This should include impact on any non-designated assets such as locally listed buildings.

The Council seeks a high standard of layout and design in all developments, large and small. Design should be based on an assessment of local context in order to allow it to complement the existing character of the area, and should harmonise with but not be identical to existing development, and where appropriate use guidance such as the Essex Design Guide. Innovative design is broadly supported, and development should not be constrained to any specific design type. Development should include appropriate and practically sized amenity spaces and gardens, and comply with relevant parking standards, providing well designed safe parking and streets. It is also important to provide attractive but practical landscaping which will work in the long term. Appropriate maintenance arrangements must also be put in place.

Safety and security issues should be addressed at the design stage, as well as the needs of all members of the community, including the elderly and people with disabilities. Design and layout of development should be practical and enable easy and convenient access for the emergency services and for the collection of refuse and recycling. External lighting should be well designed to minimise light pollution and be energy efficient.



Issues:

- How do we continue to protect historic assets in the District while meeting our development targets?
- How do we integrate new development into existing areas?
- We need to encourage high quality and innovative design;
- Securing grants and engaging with heritage stakeholder;
- Protection of at risk heritage assets;
- Ensure that there are appropriate and practical solutions for waste storage and collection;
- Do we continue to encourage minimum standards for residential parking?;
- Ensuring design is safe and secure; Providing appropriate living standards;
- Amenity space standards and garden sizes;
- The provision and ongoing maintenance of landscaping;
- Integrating development into the wider area, including access to leisure and recreation opportunities.

Are these the issues that impact upon the creation and protection of high quality spaces; are there any other issues we need to include?

Options:

- Protect and enhance the District's historic and archaeological character;
- Promote the production and expansion of a Local List;
- Promote good design in new development and ensure that new development contributions positively to the character and appearance of the District;
- Set policies for the size, type and tenure of homes we need;
- Set policies on development density;
- Set out in policies where design guidance and master plans will be required from specific sites.

Is this a suitable range of options to address the issues raised; are there any other options we should consider?

A healthy and active District



The NPPF emphasises that planning principles should *'take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs'*.

A key role of the Local Plan is to provide for development in a way that supports and encourages active and healthy lifestyles.

Statistics indicate higher than national average levels of obesity amongst adults in the Braintree District and lower than average participation in physical activity (Essex Local Authority Portraits September 2014).

Planning is important in shaping the environment in which we live, work and play. Providing leisure and recreation opportunities, or spaces for those activities to happen informally, can deliver significant environmental and economic benefits, opportunities for cultural activities, and generally improve health and wellbeing by promoting an increase in physical activity.

To accord with the NPPF we will seek to protect and enhance existing open spaces, including recreation grounds, parks, children's play areas and allotments that exist within the District.

We will also provide opportunities for new open space provision including children's play equipment and allotments in new developments.

Braintree District is predominately rural which provides opportunities for recreational access to the open countryside. The rural lanes, off-road cycle routes such as the Flitch Way, and national cycle routes all provide extensive opportunities for cycling activities throughout the District. There are also plenty of public footpaths and routes such as The John Ray Walk and The Essex Way which encourage walking in the countryside. Limited public transport services in some rural parts of the District can, however, reduce access to health, leisure and recreational facilities.

Braintree District also has an ageing population, with the proportion of residents aged over 65 being higher than the national average. There is also a higher than average number of over 65 residents admitted to hospital with hip fractures (Essex Local Authority Portraits September 2014).

Understanding and planning for demographic change and an ageing population is a fundamental consideration in sustainable planning and creating an inclusive society. There is a need to ensure that the needs of the ageing population are met through provision of accessible and appropriate housing, access to health care and access to facilities and public transport. It should be recognised that the older generation contributes significantly to our economy, and to the social and civic wellbeing of society.

Braintree District is generally affluent and deprivation levels are around the average for Essex as a whole. However, there are quite large inequalities between different areas of the District. Pockets of deprivation are located around the District's three urban centres including parts of north and east Braintree, northwest Witham and south Halstead. Although these areas are not seriously deprived in national terms, they experience greater deprivation than the majority of areas in the District.

Issues:

- Encouraging people to be physically active in their everyday lives;
- Helping to tackle obesity and promoting healthier eating opportunities;
- Meeting the needs and demands of an ageing population;
- Reducing inequalities and deprivation in society;

Are these the issues that impact upon the health and activity of residents and visitors to the District; are there any other issues that we need to include?

Options:

- Retain, create and promote open green space, leisure and recreational facilities, cycle and footpaths across the District to encourage informal and formal physical activity and active recreation;
- Retain, create and promote opportunities for green spaces for people to grow their own food, for example through the provision of allotments, community maintained spaces or through provision of larger domestic gardens on new developments;
- Restrict the number of takeaways near schools;
- Create developments that are accessible for everyone including those with limited mobility.
- Ensure that new developments provide lifetime homes;
- Encourage the development of age appropriate housing - this may include more retirement homes and specialist homes that help people to live independently, including bungalows;
- Create developments that incorporate spaces and buildings which promote community interaction;
- Support the NHS in the provision of health care facilities;

Is this a suitable range of options to address the issues raised; are there any other options we should consider?

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Climate Change and Renewable Energy



The NPPF emphasises that *'Planning plays a key role in helping shape places to secure radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change, and supporting the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure'*. It is also clear that Local Planning Authorities should avoid increasing vulnerability to climatic impacts, including flooding, by guiding development away from the highest risk areas and not increasing flood risks elsewhere. Flood risk means risk from all sources of flooding including from rivers and the sea, directly from rainfall on the ground, surface and rising groundwater, overwhelmed sewers and drainage systems, lakes and other artificial sources.

Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge facing the world today. New residential, retail and commercial development needs to consider the impacts of climate change and be built with climate resilience in mind. Future increases in rainfall throughout the year, increased wind/storm intensity and frequency, summer droughts and extreme winter weather needs to be considered and risks to be minimised through effective design, layout and choice of location for development.

Flood risk must be taken into account when allocating land for development and when determining applications. The built fabric undergoes many small changes but when taken cumulatively these can bring about considerable change. As well as allocating land for larger scale development, the plan should include policies to be used when considering smaller planning applications.

The term Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) describes a wide range of large and small scale works that can be effective ways to reduce the flow to sewerage and drainage systems. The term covers a number of different works including soakaways, permeable surfacing, green roofs, water attenuation tanks etc. Not all methods are appropriate in all ground conditions.

Methods of dealing with surface water run off involve the use of land which could otherwise be built upon and should be incorporated into the design of developments at an early stage.

Sometimes a single SUDS can be used to serve multiple development sites. To promote the efficient use of land, multiple usage should be encouraged, e.g. certain SUDS may be useful for wildlife or recreation sites. In order to remain effective over the long term, SUDS need to be maintained.

Essex County Council is expected to become a SUDS approval body in 2015. This means that new development affecting surface water drainage may require their approval and need to comply with National and Local Standards. Essex County Council has produced a draft SUDS Design and Adoption Guide and this is expected to be adopted in due course.

Some of the areas affected by river flooding, or that may be affected in the future, lie within existing settlements. Whilst it is possible to specify drainage and layout standards on new development, climate change may result in existing localised flooding problems being exacerbated within existing settlements. Such problems can occur due to poor road surface water drainage or when individuals pave their land with impermeable surfaces.

It is essential that climate resilience is built into our existing and new development. We need to future-proof our drainage systems to account for unprecedented volumes of water.



Water efficiency measures need to be designed into new development to minimise demand. This includes recycling grey water and rainwater storage to reduce demand. Tree and hedge planting in new developments, can increase the District's tree stock, enhance biodiversity, improve the air quality of the environment, act as a carbon sink and provide essential shading, especially in urban areas, to build resilience to climate change impacts such as extreme heat.

Climate change can also impact negatively on health with increases in respiratory diseases due to poor air quality, skin cancers, and heat related illnesses. The vulnerable people of our society are most at risk.

In the Braintree District there are many listed buildings and conservation areas. It is therefore important that the Council supports and encourages sympathetic energy efficient improvement to these properties to avoid increasing the financial divide between living in energy efficient homes and those too costly to heat and maintain. It is essential that older buildings are made more efficient, especially in off gas areas, in a manner that also protects the character and integrity of the building.

The government's target is to cut UK carbon emissions by 80% by 2050. Insulating our housing stock to a high standard has to be a major part of this, because housing contributes more than a quarter of Britain's total emissions. The government's Carbon Plan aims to achieve 'near zero' carbon emissions from housing by 2050. To achieve these targets, we have to insulate one more house to very high standards every minute across the UK. That's 625,000 per year.

The government published a consultation in autumn 2014 'Zero Carbon Homes' which proposes to allow developers to meet the remainder of the zero carbon targets by supporting off site carbon measures and proposes to exempt small sites (indicated to be 10 new homes or fewer) from complying with the requirement for zero carbon.

The building of low energy well insulated housing has a direct impact on fuel poverty and the associated health risks of cold, damp, mouldy homes. With energy prices rising on a 5-7% annual trend new housing built in the next 10 years must maximise energy efficiency to avoid residents falling into fuel poverty and unable to afford to heat their homes.

The UK has a target of 15% energy from renewable sources by 2020. There are a number of potential sources of renewable energy that support the economy and are increasingly viable, providing suitable local sources both at small (domestic) and commercial scale. These include solar power, biomass (forestry and farm wastes), heat pumps, wind turbines, municipal (compost) and industrial waste, and anaerobic digestion or biogas. Renewable energy schemes should be acceptable for their proposed areas considering the impact upon landscape and amenities and also the visual impact.

Encouraging our communities to reduce carbon emissions by improving energy efficiency will not only help to reduce the impact of climate change, but will also assist the Council in targeting its priorities to improve social and economic problems such as fuel poverty in our communities, a particular issue in the north of the district in areas without mains piped gas.

Decentralised energy is also seen as a key factor in reducing carbon emissions. Decentralising energy is energy generated off the main grid, created near to where it is needed, and includes micro-renewables, heating and cooling. Such schemes can serve a single building or a whole community, and in some cases are even being built out across entire towns.

Issues:

- Creating climate change resilient developments;
- Creating more energy efficient building in new developments;
- Ensuring energy efficiency measures do not cause harm to the historic fabric in our district;
- Reducing carbon emissions;
- What types of renewable energy schemes would be acceptable in the Braintree District?
- What types of fossil fuel energy schemes would be acceptable in Braintree District?
- How can we ensure the provision of 'offsite' carbon measures stay within our district?
- How can SUDS be incorporated in new development and make the most efficient use of land?
- Should the plan contain a policy to improve surface water permeability within settlements for small scale proposals. Such a policy might be applicable to the whole District, or only in places where there are flooding problems;

Are these the issues that impact upon climate change and renewable energy production; are there any other issues that we need to include?

Options:

- Require good design and layout in developments to be built with climate resilience. For example, shading and natural ventilation;
- Require high standards of energy efficiency to be provided in new developments;
- Ensure that energy efficiency measures are sympathetic to surrounding character and appearance;
- Require renewable energy schemes to be incorporated into large developments;
- Facilitate and encourage large scale renewable schemes;
- Encourage opportunities for decentralised energy networks in new and existing developments;
- Set out which SUDS types we want to be developed in the District;
- Encourage the multiple use of land used for SUDS where this is practicable;
- Set out a water permeability policy which is necessary to be met in smaller planning applications.

Is this a suitable range of options to address the issues raised; are there any other options we should consider?

Nature Conservation and landscape character



The NPPF makes it clear that, *'the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment through the protection and enhancement of valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils, minimising the impacts on biodiversity and, where possible, providing net gains in biodiversity'*.

Braintree District is predominately rural with distinctive and attractive landscapes. The countryside is a working, living landscape with farming, mineral extraction and other rural industries making an impact on landscape quality and the local economy. There are also other opportunities for tourism, leisure and recreation activities within the countryside. A careful balance needs to be achieved between development, use of the countryside as a recreational resource and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

Landscape Character Assessment is a technique that has been developed for the analysis, description and classification of the landscape. It identifies the features and elements that contribute to the landscape, enabling special character and qualities of the area to be understood. It pinpoints what makes these areas different from neighbouring areas. It also helps to develop appropriate recommendations for the future conservation and management of the

landscape to maintain and enhance the diverse character and essential qualities of the countryside.

Just outside the Braintree District, the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers a 90km area centred on the lower Stour Valley. AONBs benefit from the highest level of protection in relation to the landscape and scenic beauty as set out in the NPPF. The upper Stour Valley, adjoining the AONB, is partly located along the north and east boundary of Braintree District and is an important and sensitive rural landscape. The impact of development proposals in the upper Stour Valley will be particularly carefully assessed in light of the sensitive nature of this landscape and should support the wider environmental, social and economic objectives as set out in the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Management Plan and should not prejudice the long term aim to enlarge the area included within the AONB designation.

The landscape in the Braintree District includes four areas protected for their special scientific interest (SSSIs) as well as seven local nature reserves, local wildlife sites, and eight registered parks and gardens of historic value.

The importance of the natural environment, biodiversity and geodiversity (range of plants, animals and geological features) is recognised for the economic and social benefits, making the District a more attractive place to live and work and improving quality of life. Biodiversity protects the health of the natural environment and this enables it to provide services which people depend on such as the provision of food.

The NPPF states that in preparing plans to meet development needs, the aim should be to minimise pollution (emissions to land, air, water) and other adverse effects on the local and natural environment (including noise, smells, fumes, vibrations, light). Land and groundwater can present a potential source of pollution if they have been contaminated by previous land uses. New development can increase effects such as noise, fumes, light etc. Therefore, it is important that applications that have the potential to produce any of these impacts are adequately controlled. There is also the possibility that the proposed development might be affected by existing land uses nearby (e.g. new homes close to an industrial unit/estate) and mitigating measures would be expected to protect the proposed development from the existing and vice versa.

Issues:

- Identifying, conserving and enhancing the landscape character and those elements that make it distinctive;
- Ensuring designated habitats and protected species are conserved and enhanced in areas identified for development;
- Controlling pollution and its adverse effects on the local and natural environment.

Are these the issues that impact upon nature conservation and landscape character; are there any other issues that we need to consider?

Options

- Encourage sustainable development that draws inspiration from and values its landscape setting, through location, sympathetic design, proportionate scale and suitable use of materials;
- Provide suitable measures for the protection and enhancement of local biodiversity with suitable mitigation, where this is adversely affected by development;
- Ensure the best and most appropriate measures are used for the control of pollutants to air, land and water to prevent contamination and dangers to public health;
- Ensure development on or near a site where contamination may potentially exist, carries out sufficient site investigation to identify the nature and extent of the contamination;
- Ensure effective measures are taken to remove, treat, contain or control any contamination;
- Do not site residential development adjacent to or near to a commercial/industrial development where it is likely that the residents will be adversely affected by the operations taking place on that site and vice versa.

Is this a suitable range of options to address the issues raised; are there any other options we should consider?

EVIDENCE BASE

In order to support the new Local Plan, a strong evidence base of documents must also be produced. As set out in paragraph 158 of the National Planning Practice Guidance;

'Each local planning authority should ensure that the Local Plan is based on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area. Local planning authorities should ensure that their assessment of and strategies for housing, employment and other uses are integrated, and that they take full account of relevant market and economic signals'.

The list of evidence base documents which we already have or will be putting together is;

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
- Brownfield land study
- Demographic projections Phase 1-7
- Objectively Assessed Need Housing Assessment
- Affordable Housing Viability Study
- Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpersons Accommodation Assessment
- Settlement Boundary Analysis
- Viability Assessments
- Employment Land Needs Assessment Study
- Retail Study
- Landscape Character Assessment
- Settlement Fringe Landscape Character Review
- Historic Characterisation Study
- Protected Lanes Study
- Habitats Regulation Assessment and if necessary an Appropriate Assessment
- Updated Water Cycle Study

- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Open Space Strategy
- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Highways Impact Assessment
- Infrastructure Plan
- Walking Strategy
- Cycling Strategy
- Community Facilities/Halls Assessment

Other specific evidence may be required as we move through the Plan process to deal with a particular issue or site.

The Council will also be producing a series of documents which it is required to produce including a Statement of Consultation and the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment of the whole Plan process.

Do you think that the evidence base documents listed above are sufficient; are there any other documents that you think we should be producing?

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Development Plan – A Plan which contains policies for housing, employment growth etc., the protection of special areas, and the determination of planning applications. The current Development Plan is the Local Plan Review (2005) and the Core Strategy (2011).

Core Strategy - The overarching planning policy document in the development plan (formerly the Local Development Framework), which sets out the broad planning strategy for the District.

Adopted Local Plan Review 2005 – The Council's current development plan, which with the Core Strategy forms the Council's Development Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – Central government guidance on a number of key issues such as housing provision.

Specialist housing – Accommodation which is specifically designed and built to meet the needs of the elderly, young or vulnerable adults and may include elements of care and support for people living there.

Parish/Town Council – The most local level of government. They can also produce Neighbourhood Plans which help determine development proposals at the local level.

County Council – Responsible for the provision of schools, highways maintenance, public rights of way, fire services, social services, and minerals and waste.

Highways Agency – National body responsible for the A road and motorway network, this includes the A12 and A120 where it crosses through the District.

Heritage Assets – Listed buildings, conservation areas as well as other non-designated assets contained on a local list.

Growth Location – Areas in the Core Strategy which the Council has identified for strategic growth for housing, employment and other uses. They are situated in the main towns of Braintree and Witham.

National Heritage List – A list maintained by English Heritage which shows all statutorily designated heritage assets.

Local List – A local list of buildings or structures which are considered to be important locally, but are not identified as listed buildings in their own right.

Gypsy and Travellers – For the purposes of section 225 of the Housing Act 2004, gypsy and travellers means: a. Persons with a cultural tradition of nomadism or of living in a caravan: and b. All other persons of a nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin, including – i. Such persons who, on grounds only of their own or their family's or dependant's educational or health needs or old age, have ceased to travel temporarily or permanently; and ii. Members of an organised group of Travelling Show people or circus people (whether or not travelling together as such).

Brownfield – Land which has been previously developed, but does not include residential gardens.

Greenfield – Land which has not been developed before, usually but not always agricultural or natural land. Sites may also be considered greenfield if they have been unused for a period of time and the previous use has "returned to nature".

NHS – National Health Service provides healthcare facilities such as doctor surgeries and hospitals.
