



# RAYNE PARISH COUNCIL

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## Rayne Parish Council – Hearing Statement

Rayne Parish Council, along with neighbouring Parishes, thanks the Inspector for this opportunity to speak about the transport and infrastructure issues that arise from the potential development of West of Braintree.

### **1. Rapid Transit System – Route 3**

The viability of the West of Braintree very much depends on the proposed RTS route 3. The idea is to have modern and rapid forms of public transport, to encourage its use and encourage people to ditch their own private transport. The plan is eventually to have driverless trackless trams on dedicated routes and running alongside cycle lanes. In an ideal world this is what that District Council aspires to. In reality, there are no working models of this form of transport to base its perceived success on. There is also no funding in the viability analysis to transform it, from a straightforward bus to the intended model aspired to. In reality it will just be a bus.

The consultant (Jacobs) who has prepared this document realises there is much more work to do (Conclusion page 4). So how can we the public and also the Inspector make a valued judgement on something that is so pivotal to the viability of the West of Braintree GC. That will be on Rayne's doorstep and possibly have the RTS route 3 running through our village, depending on the option chosen.

The routes proposed for RTS 3 Stansted to Braintree are sketchy at best.

Alternative route 1 appears to run along Pods Brook, carving across more unspoilt countryside and cutting on to Rayne Road between the village of Rayne and a new housing development known as Rayne Gardens. Although a dedicated segregated route can be built this will be at the expense of more countryside.

Alternative route 2, uses pre-existing roads and travels through the village of Rayne. The village will gain no benefit from having this service run through the village, as there is no proposed stop. There can be no segregation or any priority as the roads are narrow and have traffic calming measures on them. The Street also suffers from parking issues which can cause congestion at certain times of the day. Why should the village of Rayne put up with an extra bus/tram every 7.5 – 10 minutes, when residents cannot even use it? The document in its current state does NOT allow for a stop within the village.

Alternative route 3, uses the A120 as it is with no special lane or segregation. It also uses Pods Brook Road which gets very congested at peak times. These two roads have tales of woe on a daily basis. Pods Brook Road frequently has traffic backed up to its junction with the A120, which causes dangerous situations with queuing roads on the trunk road. On

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numerous occasions the A120 can have 2 miles of queuing traffic leading to the Galleys Corner roundabout, from the Stansted direction. We appreciate that the proposed Millennium Slips and the opening up of the back of Springwood Drive are to help alleviate this congestion, but the amount of extra vehicles on the road being created by the proposed Garden Community will negate any improvements made which are needed NOW to alleviate congestion that occurs on a daily basis. It is a well-known fact that drivers will avoid the Braintree By-pass that was built to alleviate the town's congestion.

Once these routes reach Braintree there are also alternatives, one of which somehow cuts between Sun Lido Square Gardens and Nayling Road and the recently approved Broomhills Industrial Estate housing development. From there it either gains access to the Flitch Way or uses Clare Road and South Street to get to the Bus station or train station.

Let's discuss these options.

The Flitch Way is a much loved and valued public amenity. It is a linear country park and recently had a planning application decision upheld by the Secretary of State for a proposed 1600 home development refused to be built alongside it between Braintree and Rayne. During this time the District Council was in agreement that the Flitch Way should be preserved. It seems puzzling now that they appear happy to let a driverless tram drive down it every 7.5-10 minutes. The section of the pathway they want to use is one of the busiest with walkers, runners and cyclists all using it between Braintree and Rayne and with its close proximity to the countryside it is a popular spot.

So, why on earth would this route be a viable option? The Flitch Way is narrow, and it would be very hard to add in a segregated route. If they could, would it take over the whole path, so therefore it would be unable to be used by walkers and cyclists. Or make such a narrow walkway that it would become dangerous for the public to use?

The second town option is to use Clare Road and South Street. Clare Road is a residential street with traffic calming measures as it is often used as a rat run by drivers avoiding the traffic congestion along Rayne Road. It also has an access to the St Michael's infant/junior school. The pink colour coding of this route indicates that it will be *access to highway restricted to RTS specific categories of user to reduce traffic volumes*.

We can assume that perhaps the road will only be used for the RTS and residents of the Clare Road area. Have the residents of Clare Road been consulted on this? Has St Michael's school been consulted? Have traffic surveys been carried out on how this will affect Rayne Road, Springwood Drive and Pierefitte Way junctions?

The next part of the route will use South Street. This is very much unavoidable as the bus and train stations are both located off this road. But the maps show that the RTS will be given some kind of priority. As the road is narrow and always very busy, how can this be achieved?

After attending a NEGC Ltd public exhibition on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2019, I spoke at length with a Traffic Consultant, who agreed that none of the routes are ideal, especially once they reach the town centre. He even mentioned an alternative route which could make Rayne Road a prioritised route for the RTS and that 'normal' traffic could be diverted into town another way. Essentially taking Rayne's and surrounding villages direct route in town away from them. This just goes to show the incompetence of the Transport and

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Infrastructure document. Nothing is confirmed, nothing is decided and so how can there be an informed decision made if the RTS will be an option to make West of Braintree a viable development?

## **2. Rapid Transit System – Route 4**

The proposed RTS 4 Braintree to Colchester route is aspirational at best and may happen by the 2050's. It's not even funded in the viability analysis.

This is unacceptable, as people need to access work and education in Colchester. With the new A120 delayed, getting to Colchester is proving to be more and more difficult. Train services are once an hour and a change required at Witham, the bus service and road system get heavily congested.

Braintree does have two tertiary colleges. Braintree Sixth Form and Braintree College (which is part of the Colchester Institute). Even with these two establishments students still need to travel out of the town to access courses that are not run in the town. Therefore a good transport system to get to Colchester is still critical.

Word has reached the Parish Council that First Bus has yet again cut a service that runs between the Colchester schools and colleges to Rayne and Stebbing. It will no longer come out as far as the villages. This is just another nail in the coffin for rural communities that want to access education in Colchester.

To not include the RTS 4 seems naive of the NEGC as the traffic congestion issues facing the area are very real, especially with delays to the A120 and A12.

## **3. A12 Completion and Impact on A120 Improvements**

On Saturday 2nd November 2019 a workshop/exhibition was held. It was organised by Highways England and was part of the A12 Re-routing consultation to accommodate the Braintree/Colchester borders Garden Community (BCBGC).

The event was manned by Highways England and with the exception of Emma Goodings from BDC there was no presence of any NEGC Officers or Councillors. This meant that a lot of the questions raised by Locals (Marks Tey and Colchester) were not fully addressed and was the source of considerable frustration and annoyance.

The questions raised and conclusions drawn from the visit were:

1. Why does the Garden Community, which is neither planned nor approved, have precedence over the A12 improvement?
2. Why were NEGC not in attendance to put their case and respond to questions?
3. It is anticipated that the extra work on the A12 will put the completion date for the A12 back to 2028 at the earliest but more than likely 2029. This is bad news!

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4. The commencement of the A120 is heavily, if not totally, dependent upon the completion of the A12 and hence it was proffered that the completion of the A120 would be close to 2033 – a significant delay on previous estimates with unwanted consequences.
5. The small light at the end of what is currently a long and dark tunnel is that we have more time to complete work on the roads in Braintree that will become even busier with the completion of the A120. This information is detailed in a Jacobs/ECC report modelling the analysis of the A120.

#### **4. Traffic and Infrastructure issues concerning the surrounding areas.**

It is stated that the Garden Communities will be designed to reduce the need for outward commuting. This must be assuming that the new inhabitants will find employment within the GC? There are ambitious targets to achieve mode share targets and that only 30% will occur by private car. Active modes (walking and cycling) will also be heavily promoted. This is all well and good, but with the size of the GC people will still revert to using their car. The West of Braintree if fully developed will be the same size as Great Dunmow. Even in the size of villages & towns such as Rayne or Braintree, people still drive to the town or school rather than using active modes of transport. What is going to make West of Braintree any different to any other town or village in the UK? Nothing we propose.

Yes, there can be schemes employed but uptake is very low. People do not have the time to walk or cycle to a shop. Parents will drive to the local school because they need to carry on to their place of work within minutes of dropping the children off for the day. This is life, rightly or wrongly, habits will not change quickly, just because you have cycle paths, walking routes and all singing and dancing trackless trams to take you to the nearest town, (where you then have to wait 50 minutes for the one train that comes into the station.)

In fact analysis for the Department of Transport by the Local Government Association has found that the annual number of bus journeys being taken in England has fallen by more than 300 million in the last 5 years. This can be attributed to many bus routes being scrapped due to lack of funding and lack of use. So how will this affect the viability of West of Braintree, if the proposed RTS is a complete failure in its delivery, funding and uptake of the project?<sup>1</sup>

The impact of 12,500 extra homes in this area will be catastrophic for the local villages. Poorly planned public transport for rural communities means that cars are a necessity. Although Braintree District Council suggest that new residents will be encouraged to use public transport and that employment will be available locally, our experiences suggest that this is unlikely to happen. Parking and increasing traffic are already putting too much demand on our villages. Improved road links and a 'rapid transit system' are promised. However, the current Local Plan proposals do not include any new rail links. The

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<sup>1</sup> <https://inews.co.uk/news/transport-buses-regulation-franchising-passengers-commuters-london-manchester-sheffield/>

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proposed trackless tram system is new technology and not fully tested. It is unlikely that it will be in place at the beginning of the proposed developments as required by the Inspector, who stated in his letter to BDC of 8<sup>th</sup> June 2018, that the Rapid Transit System 'must have a directness, journey time and convenience benefit over the private car from the very beginning to realise this potential'.

Many of our local roads are narrow, in deep protected green lanes, already damaged by large HGVs. The old bridges, streets and houses in our medieval villages are regularly damaged by inappropriately sized vehicles trying to squeeze down narrow roads and manoeuvre in places designed for no more than passing horses and carts. Another settlement the size of Great Dunmow with all the employment opportunities promised will also involve much increased HGV transport movements, as well as private cars travelling north to seek ever-decreasing rural areas for leisure and enjoyment or to take short cuts away from congested major roads. All the models suggest that traffic will migrate south on to the trunk roads, but it is a very real possibility that commuters may use country lanes to reach the B1057, a road that will take them directly north through Thaxted, Saffron Walden and on to Cambridge, to avoid the congested trunk roads namely the A120 and the M11. These medieval market towns DO NOT need anymore congestion. The same can and does apply to Finchingfield to get to Haverhill and on to Cambridge via the A1017. These villages have historic streets and bridges. Even a small increase in road traffic will be to the detriment of the area.

Proposing that people walk or cycle does not take into account that an increasing proportion of the population are elderly and disabled people. This may prevent a community from offering equality of access to all its present and future residents.

We would like to know what BDC plan for the whole of the District in improving transport links to existing villages in the short-term. Residents from existing villages would still need to drive to link up with proposed new public transport networks and would require sufficient parking spaces.

The trackless tram is proposed to follow the existing A120 corridor, the proposals do not consider public transport improvements to existing communities, enabling improved access to major towns such as Braintree, Dunmow and to Stansted Airport/M11 corridor. Currently, for example, no public transport is available from Great Bardfield westwards to Dunmow (where the catchment secondary school is) or to employment locations such as the Airport, Cambridge, London etc. The experience as small rural communities on the border between Braintree and Uttlesford Districts is that there is little, if any, cooperation or dialogue across district boundaries to provide such services. This does not bode well for the necessary future co-operation across Districts for the proposed Garden Communities. The proposals for Uttlesford Local Plan are not consistent with those for BDC Local Plan.

BDC's objective for 'active modes' of transport cannot be applied to communities such as ours where bus services are minimal, there are no cycle lanes and commuter distances are too long to walk or even cycle for most people. Car usage is very high due to the location, 7 miles to Dunmow, 9 miles to Braintree. BDC's own figures show that currently 74% of commuters in the District use cars to get to work, despite the majority of commuter journeys being less than 5km in length. Only 11% using public transport. We do not believe that the RT proposals will aid our community.

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By their own admission there has been no Environmental Impact Assessment carried out on the whole of the RTS plan. Why not? Surely the Inspector requires this to have been carried out, so he can make a suitable judgement on the soundness of the RTS scheme, as it is vital to the soundness of the West of Braintree GC.

We firmly believe that any positives that are to be drawn from the building of the Garden Community known as West of Braintree are completely outweighed by the negatives that surround transport and infrastructure issues that will be caused by the Garden Community.

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