

North Essex Authorities - Shared Strategic (Section 1) Plan

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Question 6

Question

What are the consequences of the answers to 3 (a), (b) & (c) [A12 improvement between Chelmsford and the A120] for the feasibility of the West of Braintree and Colchester Braintree Borders GCs?

Response

- 1.1 The delivery of the A12 widening scheme between Chelmsford and the A120 junction at Marks Tey has little consequence on the West of Braintree Garden Community (WBGC), and indeed visa-versa.
- 1.2 The WBGC sits close to a triangle of major roads formed by the A12, A120 and A130/A131. WBGC is located 15km west of the A12 Junction with the A120 and a similar distance north of A12 Junction with the A130 at Chelmsford. Strategic traffic movements to and from the east will be attracted to the A120 and then the A12, joining the 3 existing lane section east of the improvement scheme. Traffic to and from the south will be attracted to the A130/A131 then the A12, west of the improvement scheme.
- 1.3 Analysis of census data for travel to and from work provides a useful indication of traffic distribution that might be expected to and from the West of Braintree. The figures provided in response to Question 21, later in this note usefully illustrate this point.
- 1.4 The census data indicates that the small proportion of 'journey to work' trips that start or end in WBGC, to and from towns such as Witham, Kelvedon, Tiptree etc., would use the A120 and convenient routes formed by north-south roads, such as the B1018 (A120-Witham-A12) and B1024 (A120-Coggeshall-A12). Consequentially very little traffic would route via the A12 to and from the site and the existing problems with A12 capacity would not affect feasibility or deliverability of the WBGC.
- 1.5 The same principle of limited impact on the A120 east of Braintree could be expected to apply in respect of traffic to and from WBGC. This demonstrates that the feasibility and deliverability of WBGC is also not reliant on the delivery of the A120 improvement scheme as queried in Matter 6, Question 1 (b).

Question 11

1.6 Question

1.7 Is the approach to the phasing of infrastructure provision at the GCs, set out in the AECOM IPPD document, justified and appropriate?

1.8 Response

Transport

1.9 The proposed access and movement strategy for WBGC set out in the Aecom IPPD (EB/088) appears sound.

1.10 At a strategic level, the identified transport infrastructure within the WBGC and immediate surroundings will work alongside existing region-wide infrastructure including West Anglian and East Anglian Rail corridors and the A120, M11 and A12 Trunk Roads, to deliver an integrated transport strategy. The provision of a Rapid Transit System (RTS) network to serve the site and provide links to rail stations, Braintree and major employee bases such as Stansted Airport would deliver a clear link with future growth areas and is supported.

1.11 At the more local level, Countryside would expect to support local bus services from an early stage of their development, that would accommodate short-distance travel and link to the strategic network.

1.12 The principle of active, high-quality streets and connections accords with the aspiration of delivering a place suitable for 21st century living and the NPPF principle of sustainable development. The delivery of WBGC around such a street hierarchy will help ensure that the modal choice for local journeys (under 2.5km) is predominantly via active modes.

1.13 Though the details of highway junctions and any new road and RTS routes are yet to be developed in detail, the scale of interventions and the schemes identified at *Figure 5: West of Braintree Movement and connectivity potential interventions*, appear a reasonable basis for an access strategy.

1.14 It is noted that the majority of transport infrastructure has been identified as being delivered with early phases of development. The principle of early delivery of infrastructure is appropriate. In particular, establishing high public transport and active travel mode shares from the outset of development is key to delivering long term sustainable travel patterns.

1.15 In consideration of *Table 3: West of Braintree Infrastructure requirements*, a detailed phasing approach will inform the specific timing of individual infrastructure. It is noted that all nine highway improvements have been identified as being delivered with phases 1 and 2. With an emphasis on investing in measures to encourage public transport and active travel, it may be practical to delay some highway improvements to later phases, if access arrangements and local traffic impact considerations for early phases are suitably addressed. The principle of paragraph 109 and 110 of NPPF would dictate appropriate trigger mechanisms.

1.16 Contribution to provisions of off-site RTS network have been identified for the early phases, with none shown for Phase 6 and beyond. In advance of an agreed mechanism, or knowledge of the mix of overall developer and public funding, it might be reasonable to expect a more even distribution of contributions following the principle of the three S106 tests, i.e. that they should be fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

Question 13

Question

(a) Are the Section 1 Plan’s policies sufficiently clear about what infrastructure needs to be provided, and by when?

(b) Should the Plan’s policies require funding for key infrastructure to be committed before planning permission is granted for any of the GCs?

(c) Should the Plan’s policies link the phased provision of infrastructure to defined trigger points in the phasing of development at the GCs?

Response

1.17 Policy SP 5 establishes clear priorities for infrastructure that are consistent with the aspiration established for WBGC.

1.18 The listed specific strategic priorities for infrastructure provision or improvements within the area appear consistent with identified constraints and the delivery of WBGC.

1.19 The site-specific transport infrastructure identified at Policy SP 10 appear reasonable as follows:

Table 1: SP10 Suggested Transport Infrastructure

Suggested Infrastructure	Comment
High speed and reliable broadband	Agreed
Smarter transport choices	Agreed
Effective public transport system	Agreed- will evolve and be delivered along with development phasing
Accessibility to local rail stations	Can be significantly delivered through RTS
Mitigation measures for strategic and local road network- incl. bus / rapid transit priority measures	Agreed- should be delivered in accordance with principles of NPPF Paras. 109 and 110.
Primary vehicular access to the site will be provided via the A120 and B1256	Agreed
Foot and cycle ways shall be provided throughout the development, including linking the site to Braintree town	Agreed
Multi-functional green infrastructure	Agreed aspiration for WBGC

1.38 It is considered that the necessary infrastructure to bring forward WBGC can be delivered to the satisfaction of the local authorities, and the communities they represent, through the normal development control requirements established through a combination of National, Regional and Local Plan polices.

1.39 The strategic approach to bringing forward of sustainable communities through the delivery of the infrastructure priorities listed above is acknowledged. It is considered that commitment to funding of key infrastructure is not required as a precursor to establishing the principle of the support for the Garden Communities, particularly WBGC as this could risk appropriate and much needed housing development coming forward prior to any such commitment.

- 1.40 The use of trigger points for infrastructure for WBGC and other developments is potentially appropriate, but details need not be established at this Local Plan stage as they can be suitably identified and managed through the normal development control process when all other requirements are known.

Question 14.

Question

Are the capital costs for the proposed RTS set out in section 5.1 of the Vision to Plan document [EB/079] realistic?

Response

- 1.41 The costs reported in section 5.1 are developed from the benchmarked rates identified in Table 5.2. It should be noted that compared with the delivery of transit schemes in large conurbations, the RTS would be based on well-developed and understood technology and tested engineering. Accordingly, these appear reasonable rates to adopt at this stage for the delivery of a modest rapid transit system, as articulated in the Vision to Plan report (EB/079).
- 1.42 The form of transit system described in the Vision to Plan report (EB/079) is considered to be appropriate, along with other initiatives identified in the Local Plan, to deliver the target public transport mode shares that have been identified for the WBGC.
- 1.43 It is considered that Phase 3 of the RTS network, which embodies the WBGC, is likely to be potentially simpler to deliver than those with more urban elements, reflecting the greater proportion of greenfield or existing road running elements likely to be required, compared with the other phases. That difference has been reflected in the lower per km rate adopted at Table 5.2.
- 1.44

Question 15

Question

Have sources for all the necessary capital funding for the RTS been identified?

Response

1.45 The Vision to Plan report (EB/079) states:

1.46 “Delivery of the scheme will seek to draw upon a variety of funding sources, including:

- Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF);
- Section 106 developer contributions;
- other potential funding sources including instruments to collect developer contributions similar to the Strategic Infrastructure Tariff which has been envisaged through the change to Policy SP5 in the Garden Communities Local Plan Section 1, and financing through public works loans or other vehicles.”

1.47 The potential sources of funding above are a reasonable assumption that reflect a broad range of funding opportunities that have supported similar schemes. The lack of more specific detail is reasonable, reflecting the stage of development of the RTS through the normal business case processes for major transport infrastructure.

1.48 Looking to set out more detailed funding strategy would be inappropriate and potentially misleading at this stage, and not necessary within the Local Plan.

-

Question 16

Question

Do sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 of the Vision to Plan document provide reliable estimates of revenue, operating costs and commercial viability for the RTS?

1.49 Response

1.50 The Vision to Plan document (EB/079) sets out clearly the benchmarked revenue and operating costs that have been used to establish the viability model for the RTS. It also sensibly adopts conservative revenue and robust costs assumptions, that are considered appropriate for the stage of development of the scheme.

1.51 The mode share calculation approach set out in Appendix A of the document is supported and replicates approaches adopted for estimating the mode shift that could be anticipated with the introduction of new public transport infrastructure for many similar projects. From discussions with Jacobs, Steer understand that the resulting mode shares derived from the passenger demand forecasting calibrated multimodal EMME transport model are consistent with the mode share aspirations set out in the Local Plan.

1.52 It is noted that phase 1 of the scheme has been subject to rigorous independent review in advance of the recently announced HIF funding that would have included consideration of the business case based on the stated revenue, operating costs and commercial viability.

1.53

Question 17

Question

Funding has been secured through the Housing Investment Fund [HIF] for a bus-based RTS serving the Tendring Colchester Borders GC.

(a) Which elements of the RTS scheme proposed in the Vision to Plan document would be covered by the HIF funding?

Response

- 1.54 As set out in response to Question 15 it could be inappropriate to rely on any one stream of potential funding for the RTS. The HIF funding initiative is currently confirmed through to March 2021. In light of stated Government policies and those of opposition parties, it would be reasonable to expect further extension of the HIF scheme or expansion of funding in a similar form to help deliver sustainable housing targets.
- 1.55 The success of the HIF bid to help deliver phase 1 of the RTS provides clear guidance that the delivery of later phases of the scheme might reasonably be expected to attract Government funding to help local authorities achieve large scale growth.
- 1.56 It appears reasonable to expect further HIF funding (or something similar) to help deliver housing based around the principle of the RTS being an integral element of the transport strategy for a development. This is true of the WBGC.

Question 18.

Question

How would connecting public transport services within the proposed garden communities be funded?

1.57 Response

1.58 The complimentary public transport services that would work with the RTS to deliver the overall mode share would be a mixture of commercial and subsidised bus services. Essex has a well-established bus service network. In the close vicinity of the WBGC there are key transport hubs such as Stansted airport, Braintree Town Centre that attract good patronage which support many of the services on a commercial basis. Additional housing and employment development would be expected to help support these and other existing currently marginal bus services.

1.59 In addition, it could reasonably be expected that some form of “pump priming” of new bus services may be required for early phases of development, in advance of the build-up of sufficient patronage to support services on a fully commercial basis. This would be consistent with the desire to establish good travel behaviours from the outset in line with the Local Plan policies.

1.60 The scale of such funding would need to be established on a case-by case basis and could be reasonably be managed through a suitable section 106 mechanism that reflects the requirements of the three tests set out in the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations.

1.61

Questions 19 and 20

Question 19

Is the proposed phasing of the introduction of the RTS system (a) realistic? (b) consistent with the proposed timing of development at the garden communities?

Question 20

Does the Vision to Plan document provide sufficient reassurance at this strategic stage of planning that it would be feasible in physical terms to construct the proposed RTS system?

Response

- 1.62 The support for the RTS from central government as confirmed by the recent HIF funding demonstrates that its introduction is realistic and should provide suitable reassurance at this local plan stage. A phased approach is appropriate with delivery of separate elements being important to individual garden communities. (see response to Question 21)

Question 21

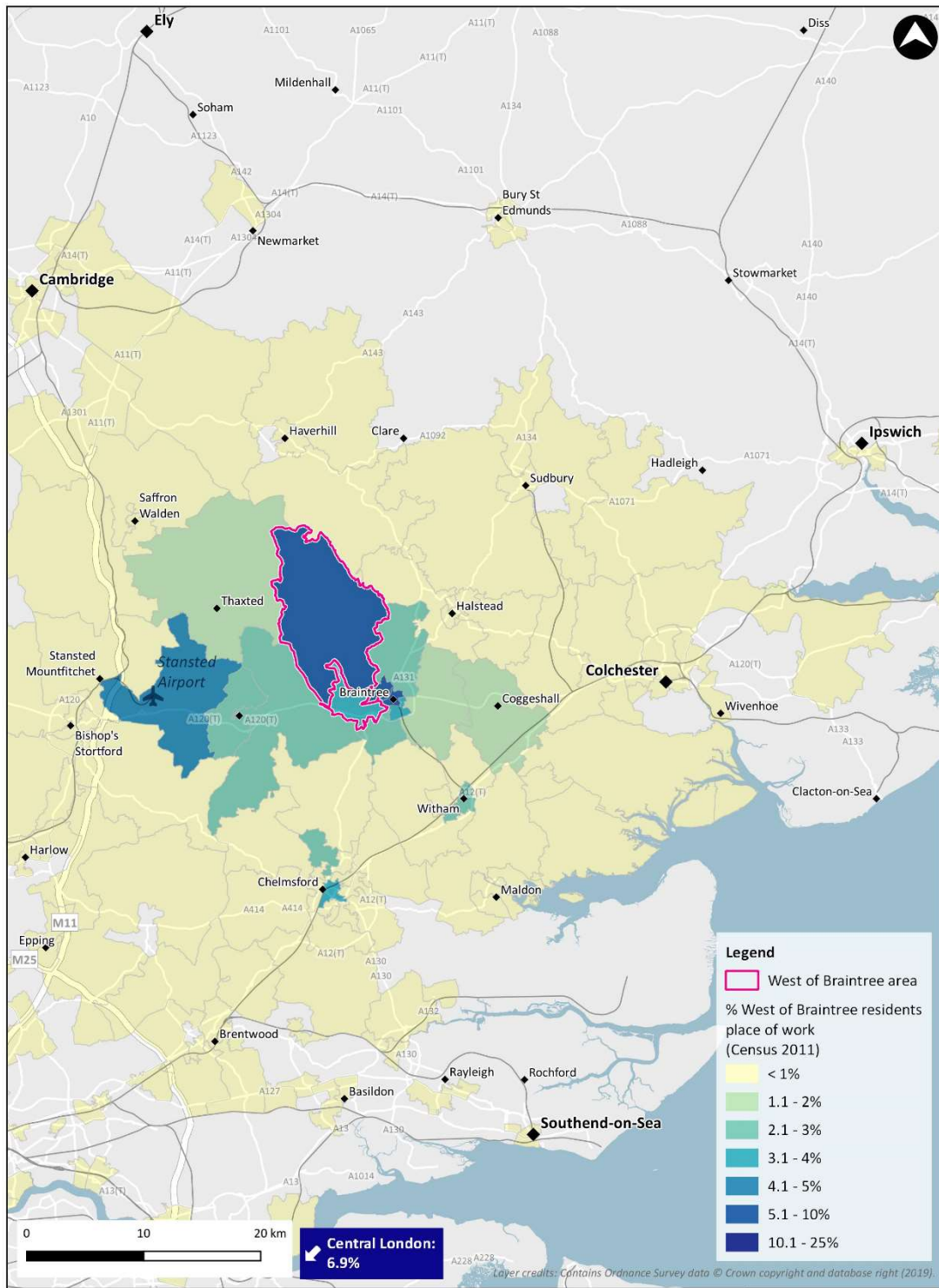
Question

What are the implications for the GCs of the proposal not to build Route 4, linking the Colchester and West of Braintree sub-systems, until after 2033?

Response

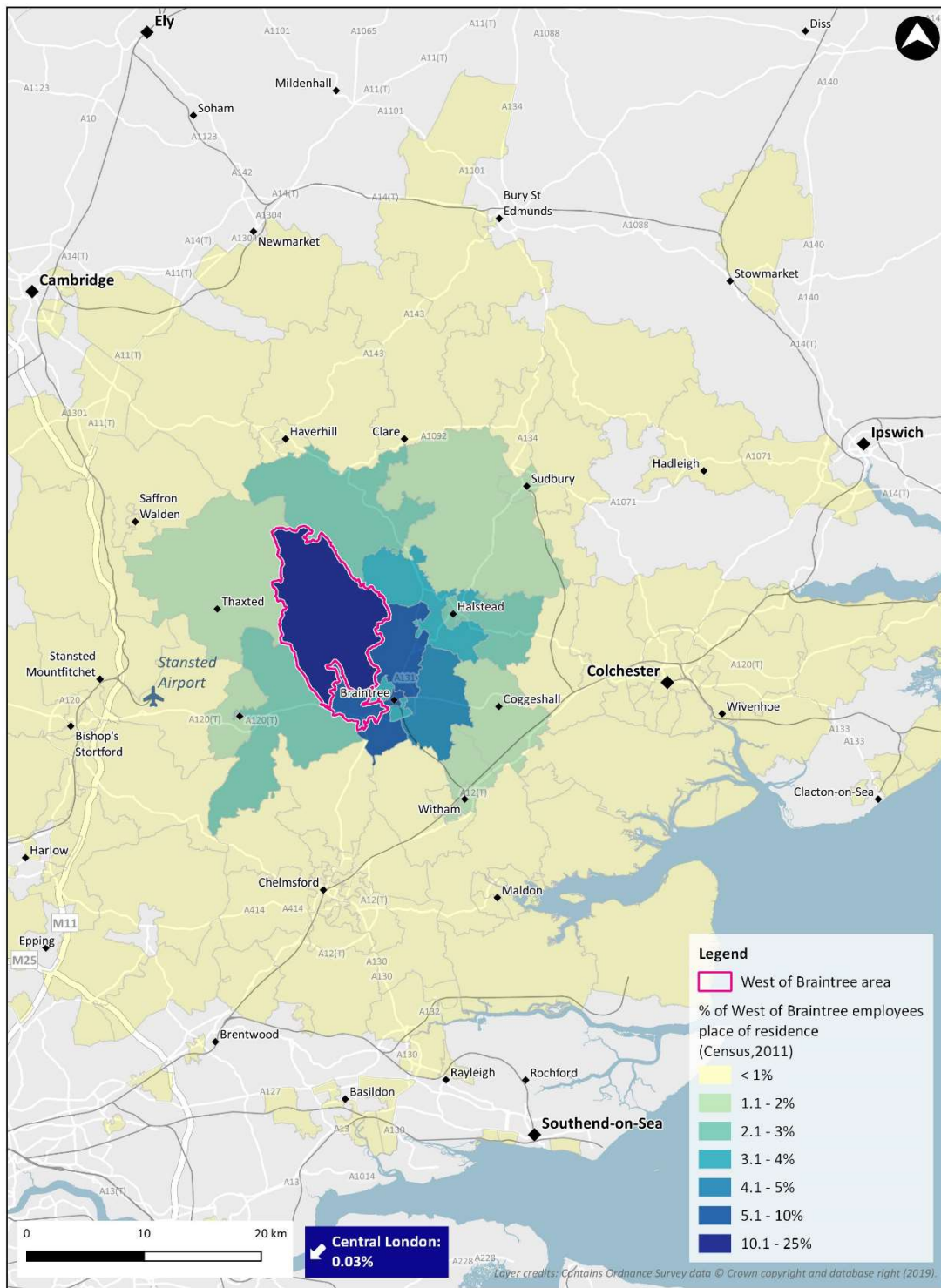
- 1.63 Figures 1 and 2, shown below, are derived from analysis of the 2011 census travel to work data and demonstrate the dominance of local travel for work. Figure 1 shows that Braintree Town and Stansted form the key destinations for those living in the vicinity of the proposed WBGC whereby a large proportion of those working west of Braintree travel to Braintree or its immediate surroundings.
- 1.64 It is most likely that few, if any, trips would be a single journey over the full length of the system, which extends to some 60km and delivery of Route 4 is considered unlikely to affect the mode share of trips from WBGC.
- 1.65 The proposed RTS system might reasonably be expected to be particularly attractive for the typical local commuter with education and leisure journey times of up to 45 minutes. Accordingly, the key element of the RTS for the Countryside proposals is Route 3 that, together with likely subsidised early complimentary local bus services, will help deliver the target public transport mode share.

Figure.2: 2011 Census-Employment Location for West of Braintree Residents



1.66

Figure. 1: 2011 Census-Residential Location for Employment West of Braintree



Question 22.

Question

The Vision to Plan document proposes a bus rapid transit system initially, potentially to be replaced beyond the Section 1 Plan period by trackless trams. Are these proposals justified and consistent with the Plan's aspirations for high-quality rapid transit networks and connections?

1.67 Response

It is considered that the delivery of mode of travel targets for WBGC is not dependent on the suggested later upgrade of the RTS. This upgrade would however potentially reflect technology advances that could be expected over the next 20 years and would retain the attractiveness of the network. It would also provide additional capacity and operational cost saving that could be welcomed.

Questions 23 and 24

Question 23.

Are the refined mode share targets set out at Figures 7-1, 7-2 & 7-3 of the Mode Share Strategy document [EB/080] justified by the evidence contained and referenced in that document?

Question 24.

Should these (or other) mode share targets be included as requirements of the Section 1 Plan's policies?

Response

- 1.68 The Mode Share Strategy document [EB/080] provides thorough analysis of mode share evidence. The example at Para 4.37, detailing the success of travel planning initiatives at Countryside's Beaulieu Park development, is particularly relevant. However, it should be said that the mode share targets for the NEGCS are ambitious and will need commitment from all stakeholders in order to be achieved.
- 1.69 It is considered that policy that encourages and supports all stakeholders to help deliver the mode share could be beneficial.

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