



Braintree District Council

Local Plan Examination of Section 2

Main Matter 7 - A Prosperous District – Homes – Strategic Growth Locations 2

June 2021

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Policy LPP 21 Strategic Growth Location - North West Braintree

Policy LPP 22 Strategic Growth Location - Land at Feering

Policy LPP 23 Strategic Growth Location - Wood End Farm, Witham

- **Are the above policies and site allocations justified by appropriate available evidence, having regard to national guidance, and local context, including the meeting the requirements of the BLP Section 1?**

North West Braintree

- 7.1 The North West Braintree growth location comprises farmland on the urban edge of Braintree adjacent to Panfield Lane and the existing Springwood Drive Industrial Estate. The location has been evaluated in strategic terms and its selection informed by landscape and transport studies amongst others. A number of highway improvements are required to enable traffic from the development to be accommodated, including the provision of a spine road through the development site linking Springwood Drive with Panfield Lane, and improvements to the Springwood Drive roundabout.
- 7.2 The site was first identified as a development site in the Core Strategy (2011). As such this allocation has been carried forward into the new Local Plan. The site has previously been subject to examination and that Inspector concluded the site to be justified and deliverable (Paragraph 64 – Report on the examination into Braintree District Council Core Strategy Development Plan Document (July 2011)). The site is located within Braintree town the largest settlement of the District and the upper tier of settlement within the settlement hierarchy. As such its allocation accords with BLP Section 1 policy SP3 Spatial Strategy for North Essex and the BLP Section 2 spatial strategy.
- 7.3 The site now has the benefit of planning permission, and it is proposed to modify policy LPP21 to reflect that permission, as well as updating the policy in respect of use class order changes, and education requirements at the request of the education authority. These modifications are set out in SDBDC008a MM28

Land at Feering

- 7.4 By accommodating development in adjoining settlements in accordance to their scale, this SGL is consistent with the spatial strategy for North Essex (SP3) and the BLP Section 2 broad spatial strategy i.e. to concentrate development on the A12/GEML corridor. Kelvedon with Feering is a key service village¹ which is the

¹ As defined in the BLP Section 2 spatial hierarchy

second tier of the spatial hierarchy with physical capacity for expansion, the villages and this site benefits from sustainable transport connections to regional urban centres of Chelmsford, Colchester and London.

- 7.5 It is consistent with the core planning principles of the NPPF (para 17) due to it being a mixed-use development in an area with housing need but little or no capacity to accommodate it on previously developed land. Open spaces and areas to mitigate surface water flooding can be delivered within the SGL and outside of it, along with avoidance of incompatible development on the Domsey Brook fluvial flood zone 2. Heritage assets are considered within the Heritage Impact Assessment (BDC060) which confirms that conservation area, Scheduled Ancient Monument and listed building assets can be conserved in an appropriate manner without further mitigation within the policy. The SGL is well located to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling where the majority of day-to-day services can be provided sustainably once development is completed.
- 7.6 One of the most frequent objections to the SGL is the road infrastructure especially to Kelvedon High Street and Gore Pit Junction at the north of Inworth Road. The Council believes this is addressed through a strategic solution, to be delivered with the A12 widening as part of its development consent order (DCO). The specific delivery mechanism for upgrading A12 J24 is noted in SoCG013 with ECC and timescales for delivery confirmed within Highways England's published project information. All parties agree it will provide improved access from Inworth road, with further detailed traffic modelling, environmental impact and layout of this scheme published in the [DCO public consultation](#). The current timetable proposes that construction will commence in 2023/24 and the road is open to traffic by 2027/28.
- 7.7 The NPPF confirms the importance of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in the plan-making process, and in justifying the strategy proposed. Page 113 of BDC025-1-2 [Section 2 SA](#) concludes Feer 233, 232 and 230(Group L) will have significant positive impacts in relation to a number of sustainability objectives, particularly for sustainable transport. There is a negative uncertain on the water environment due to a lack of information at the time which has been addressed section 5.1 of the IDP update. Other negative impacts identified are applicable across almost all other reasonable alternatives, including loss of greenfield, air quality and soil, or are matters that can be readily addressed through the delivery of infrastructure to support the development.
- 7.8 The Braintree Viability Study ([BDC008](#)) shows that the larger component of the SGL (795 dwellings) is viable and deliverable. The site is within the higher value 'rural urban fringe' and assumed to be within the Chelmsford BRMA (Colchester BRMA applies to the northern and eastern parts of Braintree District), although all large strategic sites have scored comfortably in excess of the main and the sensitivity

benchmark land value including at 35 dph (para 3.11). A tile² similar in scope with 40% affordable and 2% self-build is modelled at para 4.29 – 4.2 of the study. Taking into consideration the infrastructure schedule within the IDP update at chapter 13, there are no foreseeable schemes required that would justify high strategic infrastructure costs/opening up costs of 250k/ha or a high cost scenario of +10k/unit. The requirement to create a distributor road to link between Inworth Road and London Road has also fallen away, although this is likely to be delivered in some form, a lower highways specification is acceptable, creating more land available for residential use in lieu of landscape and noise mitigation.

- 7.9 The smaller component of the SGL (40 dwellings) which would be similar to tile B10 for a residential site in the rural fringes is shown as one of the more viable case studies in the Braintree Viability Study (para 4.13 – 4.19). Strategic infrastructure constraints exist in relation to the creation of safe walking and cycling routes to Gore Pit Junction which limits delivery of this site in isolation. Parameter plans and illustrative masterplans will need to address this issue by providing a suitable walking and cycling route.
- 7.10 The infrastructure delivery plan is consistent with the agreements within SoCG014 with Crown Estates, SoCG004 Highways England and SoCG013 ECC. This policy is sound; it is justified, based on evidence, effective and consistent with the NPPF.

Wood End Farm, Witham

- 7.11 This is a Strategic Growth Location which further extends the urban area of South West Witham thus is consistent with SP3 the spatial strategy for North Essex which seeks to accommodate development in settlements in accordance to their scale. It is also consistent with the spatial strategy within the BLP section 2 to concentrate development on the A12/GEML corridor. Witham Town is the highest tier of the spatial hierarchy. Witham and this SGL in particular has good access to sustainable road and rail connections to regional urban centres of Chelmsford, Colchester and London and is located directly adjacent to a site allocated in the 2011 Core Strategy which is currently under construction.
- 7.12 In terms of Sustainability Appraisal, Page 116 of BDC025-1-2 [Section 2 SA](#) concludes WITC) will have significant positive impacts in relation to a number of sustainability objectives, including a minor positive for sustainable travel and a significant positive for accessibility. The negative impacts identified are applicable across almost all other reasonable alternatives, including loss of greenfield, air quality and soil, or are matters that can be readily addressed through the delivery of infrastructure to support the development.

² A tile is a notional 1ha site used in the economic viability study

- 7.13 The allocation of this site is consistent with the core planning principles of the NPPF (para 17). The policy proposes a residential-led development in an area with housing need but little or no capacity to accommodate it on previously developed land. A mix of uses, including employment, retail and education is accessible within a 20-minute neighbourhood. The SGL is well located to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling where the majority of day-to-day services can be provided sustainably once development is completed. Open spaces and areas to mitigate surface water flooding can be delivered within the SGL and there are opportunities to access the countryside via a restored footpath network.
- 7.14 The site is subject to a current planning application which is pending consideration and is expected to be determined shortly. Further updates to the timescale will be providing during the hearing sessions, if available.

- **Do the housing land site allocations identified above show how they will contribute to the achievement of the overall housing requirement of the BLP Section 1 (14320 new homes) and its timescale for delivery?**

Land North West of Braintree

- 7.15 The site has two developers Mersea Homes and Hill Residential. The site has been granted outline planning permission for 636 dwellings as part of Hybrid permission for 825 dwellings granted 02.03.2020 ([15/01319/OUT](#)), and full planning permission for 189 dwellings (Phase 1) as part of Hybrid permission granted 02.03.2020 ([15/01319/OUT](#)). As set out in the Council's Housing Trajectory ([Topic Paper 2](#), Appendix 1), Phase 1 is expected to start in February 2023 with completions from 2023 to 2026, the remainder of the site will start in 2027 with completions from then to 2032/2033. The Council is therefore confident that this site can be delivered during the Plan period and contribute toward the housing requirements set out in the Section 1 Local Plan.

Land at Feering (also known as Land south of Feering/west of A12)

- 7.16 The majority of the SGL is within single landownership of Crown Estates who will act as masterdeveloper, with a minority circa 40 dwellings in the ownership of a major housebuilder. A parcel in Crown Estate's ownership was granted planning permission as [16/00569/OUT](#) & [19/01222/REM](#) for 162 dwellings and is under construction by Bloor Homes. A suggested amendment put forward in [Topic Paper 1](#) would remove this from the Strategic Allocation, leaving 835 dwellings to be delivered as part of the SGL.
- 7.17 In accordance with the analysis within Appendix 2 of the [Housing Topic Paper](#) for the assessment of large sites, page 43, the Council is confident this site can contribute

as forecast to the overall housing requirement. Since 2017, delivery timescales have been adjusted to deliver 795 dwellings (for both sites) within the plan period as opposed to 750 at the time of submission. This is in addition to 162 dwellings at Land off Inworth Road which is under construction and is expected to be completed in 2023/24. The delivery rate of is discussed in Appendix 2, page 16 of the Housing Topic Paper. This trajectory is supported by the landowner as set out in SOCG014 Crown Estates.

7.18 For the 835 dwellings are to be delivered as part of the SGL, a number of points have been resolved since the Local Plan was submitted which results in improved clarification and certainty:

- The A12 improvement project has a detailed route and has a published timetable for construction, including start and finish dates of 2023/24 to 2027/28. Further the preferred route and detailed land requisition during construction is published in the A12 widening consultation expected to begin in June.
- Traffic reduction as a result of J24 moving to Inworth Road reducing mitigation required at Gore Pit junction as published in the A12 widening consultation.
- Early delivery 162 dwellings Land east of Inworth Road.
- Greater clarity for the provision of primary healthcare at Kelvedon as published in the IDP update.
- A planning performance agreement is being negotiated with the largest developer and a planning application is being prepared for submission in Q2 2022/23 with Reserved Matters in Q2024/25.

7.19 In summary the Council can therefore confirm that, given the outline and full permissions already in place for Land at Inworth Road ([16/00569/OUT](#) & [19/01222/REM](#)) and the construction work underway, that it has confidence that these sites will be delivered at the capacity and timings set out within the updated housing trajectory. For the remaining dwellings in the SGL, the Council has a timetable in place for the planning application and construction which demonstrate that the site is deliverable with the plan period as set out in the updated housing trajectory.

Wood End Farm, Witham

7.20 Wood End Farm is shown in the revised housing trajectory within the Housing Topic Paper and is anticipated to be completed by monitoring year 2028/29. It has a current planning application for 400 dwellings plus a residential care home from a housebuilder which is pending consideration and is expected to be determined this summer. This shows that the number of dwellings proposed can be accommodated

on the site. As such the Council has every confidence that the site will deliver the number of homes on the timings set out within the housing trajectory.

Do policies LPP 21 to LPP 23 provide clear direction as to how a decision maker should react to a development proposal in relation to these allocations?

Land NW Braintree

7.21 The modifications to LPP21 set out in MM28 of SDBDC008a are considered necessary as they more accurately reflect the planning permissions granted on this site, and the educational requirements for the site. The policy is also updated to reflect the use class order changes. The policy provides clear direction to the decision maker on the requirements which the site is expected to deliver and the site boundaries are clearly shown on the relevant Inset Map.

Land at Feering

7.22 Yes, this policy and preamble (as amended) sets out the overall residential dwelling expectations from the allocation, it is clear that a mixture of uses should be delivered to include employment, retail and associated infrastructure. Site specific infrastructure requirements is clearly set out within the policy and supported by the IDP update, the preamble identifies the most pertinent local issues and the policy sets out how these issues will be addressed in a future planning application. It is considered that the decision maker will be clear as to the expectations for infrastructure delivery. The SGL is also depicted on Inset Map 23 Feering with a clear boundary within which that development is expected to take place. Some infrastructure can also be delivered off-site in accordance with a S.106.

7.23 Most of the policy and preamble amendments below are updates for clarity to make the policy clear and effective to the decision maker. During the drafting of SoCG014, development management was consulted to ensure that the policy is sufficiently clear for the decision maker and the developer.

7.24 An amendment has been agreed, as detailed in SoCG014 Crown Estates, to increase the allocation of the SGL to 'around 835 dwellings' where Crown Estates can deliver 795 of the allocation and another housebuilder can deliver 40 dwellings. The Council have taken off 165 dwellings to account for an extant planning permission and adopted the wording 'around' making the quantum of development can vary positively or negatively by a small amount. This balances making effective use of land and recognition that noise, landscape, heritage and other constraints will be resolved as part of the

parameter plan, but may have a downward pressure on housing yield. It should be noted that, the overall capacity is stated in the policy, rather than the deliverable amount within the plan period as previously drafted. The Council considers modification is necessary, clear and justified.

- 7.25 The Council's favoured approach is to establish parameter plans, design code and illustrative masterplans similar to SGLs at North West Braintree and Land East of Broad Road, therefore the Council considers a modification is necessary to replace all references to 'masterplanning' with 'parameter plans, design code and illustrative masterplans'. This is an additional modification which was not previously included in [SDBDC008a](#).
- 7.26 A country park on the southside of the A12 was part of the allocation in 2017 which would've provided additional open space, above and beyond the standard open space requirements on the site. This attracted objections, including from Feering Parish Council. It has become apparent that significant proportions of this area is required for A12 widening and mitigation measures, such as landscaping and balancing ponds, leading the suggested amendment to remove the country park. There may be an opportunity that mitigation areas, which can also include ecological off-setting, public rights of way and balancing ponds, could become publicly accessible but under Highways England landownership – further details are published in the A12 widening consultation. Instead, Crown Estates has offered land within their ownership adjacent to Feering Cricket Ground which could become a practical expansion of existing sports provision in an ideal location. This would be the subject of S.106 off-site provision of infrastructure and it is not proposed to specifically allocate this within the Plan. The suggested changes in SD008b gives policy flexibility to the provision of off-site sports pitches or the eventual location on-site.
- 7.27 Change to the gypsy and travellers policy is standard across all SGL in section 2. Further erudition is submitted as part of Main Matter 11.
- 7.28 In SD008b and SoCG014 Crown Estates, the Council is suggesting modifications that are necessary for highways and transport infrastructure to reflect that major road infrastructure requirements to support development is no longer a constraint. This was J24 of the A12 but there remains highways capacity, walking/cycling conflict and physical constraints on Gore Pit Junction and its approaches. It is evidenced by traffic modelling in the Braintree preferred options assessment ([EB035-1-3](#)), as supplemented by mitigation options testing in the planning application for Land at Inworth Road. Further modelling evidence of highways post A12 widening is also available however the Council acknowledges that a study has yet to combine the two.

- 7.29 The Council have also agreed to amend the wording of bullet point 12 in accordance with the SoCG013 with ECC. '*Contributions to an all movements A12 junction at Feering*'. Should the inspector be minded to retain this bullet point, the Council suggests that the bullet point is amended as agreed.
- 7.30 The Council have agreed to amend the paragraph regarding the historic environment which enhances the treatment of the conservation area and listed buildings affected by the development. This is in accordance with the SoCG007 with Historic England and has also been agreed with Crown Estates in SoCG014.
- 7.31 MM29 of the further suggested changes in relation to the Feering SGL however this is superseded by SoCG007 with Historic England and later, the SoCG014 with Crown Estates. These were signed more recently which results in additional and overriding changes.
- 7.32 The Council's suggested modifications are considered necessary for the soundness of the plan, i.e. they are justified, consistent with national policy and effective, as they will enable the a mixed use development to be brought forward in a sustainable location and in comprehensive manner.

Wood End Farm

- 7.33 Yes, this policy (as amended) sets out the overall residential dwelling expectations from the allocation, it is clear what associated infrastructure should be provided with the development. Site specific infrastructure requirements is clearly set out within the policy and how it will be addressed in a future planning application. It is considered that the decision maker will be clear as to the expectations for the planning application.
- 7.34 MM30 of [SDBDC008a](#) in relation to Woodend Farm SGL incorporates the changes agreed with ECC regarding early years and childcare. A change is required to limit the overall quantum of residential development to 400 dwellings to reflect the planning application which takes into account land required by the A12 widening. These changes are necessary to make the policy sound.