

**Braintree District Council**

**Local Development Framework  
and  
Review of Community Strategy**

**Braintree District 2025  
Issues and Options Document  
Core Strategy DPD Regulation 25**

**Strategic Environmental Assessment  
and Sustainability Appraisal**

**Environmental Report  
Non-Technical Summary**

**April 2007**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Braintree District Council is currently preparing plans that will guide the future development of the District to 2021 and beyond. Proposals for the development and use of land will be set out in the local development framework (LDF) and proposals relating to social and community issues will be set out in the Community Strategy. The Council has previously sought views on issues of importance and aspirations for the future of the District together with views on the future development of the area. The Braintree 2025 Issues and Options Document now builds on that work by setting out a series of options for the future of the area on which views are invited.

As part of the process of undertaking this stage of the LDF and the Community Strategy, the Council commissioned Essex County Council to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal integrating the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. The appraisal assesses the options and issues put forward in the Issues and Options Document against sustainability objectives. This report is the Non-Technical Summary of that appraisal.

The appraisal aims to assess and predict the economic, social and environmental effects that are likely to arise from the issues and options set out in the current consultation document. The appraisal integrates two processes:

- Sustainability Appraisal (SA) - a process for understanding whether policies, strategies or plans promote sustainable development, and for improving those policies etc to deliver more sustainable outcomes. SA is required for Local Development Frameworks under the 'Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004'.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) - a process for predicting the significant environmental impacts of specific plans and programmes, and taking them into account. SEA is required for Local Development Frameworks under EU 'Directive 2001/42', transposed into English law by the 'Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004'.

The EU Directive (2001) states that information should be provided on "the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic, material assets including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors" (Annex 1(f)).

The purpose of undertaking the appraisal at this stage of the process is to identify potential impacts arising from the issues and options in order to assist the future stages of preparation of the Community Strategy and the LDF.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This report has been prepared in accordance with guidance set out in 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive', and 'Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks' (both ODPM 2005).

The appraisal of the Issues and Options document has been conducted through a three stage process:

- Preparation of a Scoping Report - which identifies relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives; the relevant baseline information; and sustainability objectives. This report provides the source information that was accessed during the appraisal. It is subject to a 5-week consultation with 3 statutory consultees – the Environment Agency, Natural England, and English Heritage. The responses from the consultees are incorporated into the appraisal.
- Appraisal of the Document – which assesses the options and issues against the sustainability objectives with reference to identified policy guidance and objectives and available information. The appraisal identifies the impact of the options and issues on sustainability objectives; whether the impacts vary over time; and potential cumulative and significant effects.
- Preparation of the Environmental Report – which is the published full report of the appraisal. The report sets out a review of the policy guidance and baseline information used to inform the appraisal as well as a full account of the appraisal itself. This Non-Technical summary highlights the key matters arising from the appraisal.

Twelve sustainability objectives were identified for appraising the issues and options, with the first objective being an over-arching objective to which the others contribute (see Figure 1). The appraisal assessed the impact of the options and issues against each of the objectives numbered 2 to 12, taking into account relevant policy guidance and baseline information, in order to inform:

- extent to which the option or issue may contribute to achieving the sustainability objectives;
- any change in the degree of impact over time - the appraisal looks at 3 periods,
  - Short Term - Present day to 2011
  - Medium Term - 2011-2016
  - Longer Term - 2016 and beyond.
- measures that could improve contribution of the option or issue to sustainability;
- any linkage with, or impact on, other options or matters that could have broader implications and may be defined within one of 3 types of effect,
  - Secondary effect – not a direct result of the option or issue, but occur away from the original effect or as a result of a complex pathway,
  - Cumulative effect – whereby several options and issues each have insignificant effects but together have a significant effect, or where several individual effects have a combined effect,
  - Synergistic effect – effects that interact to produce a total effect greater than the sum of the individual effects;
- any other factors to consider during future work on the Community Strategy and LDF.

**Figure 1: The Sustainability Objectives**

- 1 To ensure the delivery of high quality sustainable communities where people will want to live and work.**
- 2 To create safe environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion.
- 3 To provide everybody with the opportunity to live in a decent home.
- 4 To promote town centre vitality and viability.
- 5 To achieve sustainable levels of prosperity and economic growth.
- 6 To conserve and enhance the biological and geological diversity of the environment as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development.
- 7 To promote more sustainable transport choices both for people and moving freight ensuring access to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling.
- 8 To improve the education and skills of the population.
- 9 To maintain and enhance the cultural heritage and assets within the District of Braintree.
- 10 To reduce contributions to climatic change.
- 11 To improve water quality and reduce the risk of flooding.
- 12 To improve air quality.

### **3. APPRAISAL OF ISSUES AND OPTIONS**

The Issues and Options document requests views on a range of matters set out in terms of a series of numbered issues, options and questions. None of the numbered questions have been appraised because they request expression of a view or information from consultees, and as such cannot be directly appraised at this time. The responses to the questions, and the subsequent policy options developed from those responses, will require appraisal during the further stages in the preparation of the Community Strategy and LDF.

All of the numbered issues and options have been appraised, with the exception of Issue 5 and Issue 6, together with their associated Options 12 to 15. These options and issues, relating to Sustainable Development and Climate Change, and to Social, Community and Environmental Issues, have not been appraised because they ask direct questions for views on matters that underpin, and should emerge through, the appraisal of the range of other issues and options in the document.

Generally, it is the numbered options that have been appraised. However, in those instances where the options associated with an issue are phrased in terms of a 'yes' response or a 'no' response then it is the issue that has been appraised. Where more than one issue and associated options raise similar and/or related matters they have been jointly appraised.

The remainder of this section of the report follows the structure of the Issues and Options document to set out the summary of the appraisal.

#### **A. OVERALL VISION FOR BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

The appraisal of this part of the Issues and Options Document has focused on three matters – the current vision for the District; the Economic Scenarios; and whether different approaches are appropriate in different parts of the District.

##### **i) Current Vision for the District**

A joint appraisal was conducted of Issues 1 and 2, together with their associated Options 1 to 6. The key issue is the extent to which there is compatibility and alignment between the Vision and the sustainability objectives. The current Vision addresses transport, safety and health, economic and social responsibility matters that contribute directly and indirectly to achievement of a number of the sustainability objectives. However, the current Vision does not have a specifically environmental dimension. This means that there is a lack of clarity on the approach of the Vision to environmental matters and the degree to which they would be considered both in their own right and as relevant matters in pursuit of the current Vision.

##### **ii) Economic Scenarios**

A joint appraisal was conducted of Issue 3 and its associated Options 7 to 9. Currently, Braintree District experiences high levels of net out-commuting, particularly to neighbouring sub-regional centres and London. This limits the District's ability to achieve sustainable levels of prosperity and economic growth; improve education and skills; promote more sustainable transport; and promote town centre vitality and viability. It also

adversely affects the achievement of the range of environmental components of the sustainability objectives.

The remaining two economic scenarios would refocus the District's economy and offer the opportunity for it to be more broadly based and develop in a more sustainable fashion. A focus on 'Leisure, Heritage and Nature', by drawing more people to the District, would help expand and support the range of retail and leisure facilities and other services in the District, including sustainable transport. Nevertheless, the scenario would have negative impacts if travel to and within the District was predominantly by car and if visitor numbers and activities were of a scale and nature that would cause damage to the natural and cultural heritage of the District.

The 'Where Ideas Take Shape' scenario offers the prospect of high quality jobs requiring a strong skills base and encouraging development and retention of skills within the District. A knowledge-driven economy could lead to lower environmental impacts, directly through the nature of the new businesses and indirectly through lower net commuting levels. Also, such development focused on local start-up businesses, could create stronger ties with the local community. Higher quality and skilled jobs, together with increased numbers of residents working locally, is likely to retain more spending in the District, to the benefit of other businesses and services.

### **iii) Different Approaches in Different Parts of the District**

A joint appraisal was conducted of Issue 4 and its associated Options 10 and 11. The diverse range of social, economic and environmental circumstances within Braintree District means that different approaches to policy will be required if all parts of the District are to contribute to a sustainable strategy. However, many of the differences of approach are likely to emerge through the interaction of the range of general policies, rather than require specific detailed policy. Two important considerations will be the contribution that existing built up areas could make to the sustainability objectives in the future and how to manage any change in the strategy for the District in a sustainable fashion in all parts of the District.

## **B. SETTLEMENT STRATEGY**

The appraisal of this part of the Issues and Options Document has focused on three matters – the settlement strategy options; direction of growth of the main settlements; and affordable housing.

### **i) Settlement Strategy Options**

Issue 7 and Issue 8 have not been appraised because the appraisals for associated Options 16 to 35 inform consideration of both Issues.

The Document puts forward five main settlement strategy options, with the options of Urban Concentration and Infrastructure Provision including sub-options,

- Existing Commitments and Sites within Existing Built-Up Areas;
- Urban Concentration;
- Dispersal;
- New Settlement;
- Infrastructure Provision.

The Issues and Options Document sets the settlement strategy options within the context of the future dwelling requirements for the District. A total dwelling provision of 5,510 dwellings in Braintree District is identified for the period 2006 to 2025. Of this total, the Document identifies that existing commitments will provide 3,090 dwellings, leaving a further 2,420 dwellings to be identified within the strategy. The District Council has commissioned an Urban Capacity Study to identify how many of these further dwellings can be accommodated on previously developed land and how much greenfield land would need to be allocated.

For the purposes of this appraisal it has been assumed that all settlement strategy options will include an element of development on greenfield land, apart from the Option 'Existing Commitments and Sites within Existing Built-Up Areas'. The appraisals of the settlement strategy options will need to be reviewed once the scale of potential greenfield allocations has been refined.

**a) Option 16 - Existing Commitments and Sites within Existing Built Up Areas**

An individual appraisal was conducted of Option 16. The focus of development on existing commitments and within existing built up areas would afford continuity for investment in provision of services as well as supporting the town centres. It would also facilitate mixed use development that could aid the local economy by providing premises for new and local businesses and helping to reduce out-commuting. By concentrating development at existing centres this option provides opportunity to provide more sustainable choices of transport, with failure to do so adversely impacting on air quality and safety due to traffic volumes and congestion. Development in existing built up areas is likely to protect biodiversity and natural heritage over the wider area, though there may be local impact through re-use of vacant or green spaces and intensification of development would need to respect the character of the existing urban fabric. This strategy could be dominated by high density, small-scale developments that could limit the ability of the District to achieve an adequate mix of housing types or proportion of affordable housing, provide renewable energy sources in new development, and adversely impact on water quality and flooding. The distribution of development within this strategy would need to be appraised during future stages of preparation of the Core Strategy to ensure that the distribution facilitates a sustainable long-term strategy throughout the District.

**b) Option 17 - Urban Concentration: New Development to be Located at Braintree, Halstead and Witham**

- **Option 18 - Braintree**
- **Option 19 - Witham**
- **Option 20 - Braintree and Witham**
- **Option 21 - Braintree, Witham and Halstead**

Individual appraisals were conducted of Option 17 and each of its four sub-options (Options 18 to 21), although they are considered jointly in this report.

Braintree, Halstead and Witham are the three largest settlements in the District with the widest range of local employment, and services and facilities. Generally, a strategy of urban concentration at the three centres would mostly reflect the same impacts reported for the strategy based on 'Existing Commitments and Sites within Existing Built Up Areas'. Such an approach would provide opportunity for provision of a wider range of sites for economic development and a broader range of housing mix and affordability at the three

named centres. However, by limiting development in villages and rural areas housing and economic opportunity would be restricted in those areas with potential adverse impacts on provision of local services and jobs, with consequential increase in car travel. The inclusion of greenfield urban extensions in the urban concentration strategy would also increase impacts on the biodiversity and environmental heritage of the District.

Braintree is the largest settlement in the District, offering the widest range of homes, jobs and services, but with a limited rail service. Witham has limited services and facilities although it is on the Great Eastern rail mainline. Halstead is the smallest of the settlements with more limited services and no rail service. All three settlements have environmental constraints in their surrounding area, particularly Halstead.

The degree of impacts arising from the urban concentration strategy will depend on the scale and distribution of development between the three centres. This has yet to be determined. Further appraisals of these options will be required during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy to define the proposed scale and location of development at each centre. Such appraisals should be undertaken jointly with further appraisals of the proposed 'Directions of Growth' (see below).

#### **c) Option 22 – Dispersal: New Development Spread More Widely Across the District**

An individual appraisal was conducted of Option 22. A dispersed strategy would have greater adverse impacts than a strategy of urban concentration due to inclusion of more and smaller settlements. Dispersal of development would have the effect of increasing adverse impacts on biodiversity, water and air quality. By reducing the focus of development at the larger centres dispersal would reduce their ability to support local services and develop sustainable transport, without increasing the prospect of increased provision in villages and rural areas. These factors, together with the likelihood that housing growth in villages and rural areas would not be matched by jobs growth would increase car travel, especially for commuting.

The degree of impacts arising from the dispersal strategy will depend on the scale and distribution of development across the district. This has yet to be determined. Further appraisals of these options will be required during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy to define the proposed scale and location of development at each centre.

#### **d) Option 23 - New Settlement**

An individual appraisal was conducted of Option 23. The scale and rate of development requirements in Braintree District are insufficient for a new settlement to have a positive impact during the period of the strategy. A new settlement would have an adverse impact on biodiversity and the environmental heritage and not provide a sufficient economic focus, range of services, or sustainable transport to meet the needs of its residents. By providing just a single development focus a new settlement would not meet housing and job provision needs elsewhere in the district. It would also limit the investment available for provision and enhancement of services in existing areas. The extent to which this restricted opportunities for promotion of town centres and development of sustainable transport in those areas would increase car travel, with negative impact on safety, air quality and climate change.

Currently there is no indication of the scale and location of a new settlement. Further appraisal of the proposed scale and location of any new settlement would be required during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy.

**e) Option 24 - Infrastructure Provision: New Development to be Located to Assist with the Provision of New Infrastructure**

- **Option 25 - Halstead and Halstead Bypass**
- **Option 26 - North of Witham and link road between B1018 and A12**
- **Option 27 - Hatfield Peverel and link road between B1019 and A12**
- **Option 28 - Tye Green, Cressing and passing loop on Braintree branch line**

Individual appraisals were conducted of Option 24 and each of its four sub-options (Options 25 to 28), although they are considered jointly in this report.

A strategy giving preference to delivery of specific local infrastructure would assist in improving the road and rail transport network of the District. However, it would have adverse impacts on biodiversity and other environmental matters. Locations based on infrastructure provision would not necessarily be best related to meeting local housing requirements where they arise or providing the most appropriate locations for business use. In addition, the dispersed locations of the infrastructure provision would adversely impact on town centres, access to local services and opportunities for sustainable transport, thus encouraging an increase in car use.

Witham is the largest settlement included within this option but has limited services and facilities, although it is on the Great Eastern rail mainline. Halstead has more limited services, with no rail service, and is situated in the Colne Valley which has significant biodiversity and environmental interest. Both Witham and Halstead have a potentially significant junction where air quality could be improved if traffic were reduced by new road links. The remaining locations at Tye Green Cressing and Hatfield Peverel are villages with a very limited range of services.

The scale of any greenfield requirements is still to be determined. At this stage it is not possible to assess whether any or all of the possible locations for infrastructure provision could be supported by development. Further appraisal of the proposed scale and location of the options for infrastructure provision would be required during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy. Any appraisal would need to consider each infrastructure proposal, and its relationship to the scale and location of its associated development, as well as any development proposal.

**ii) Directions Of Growth**

- **Options 29 to 31 - Braintree: south west, west or north east**
- **Option 32 - Halstead: sites within existing built up area**
- **Options 33 to 35 - Witham: west (north of railway line), west (south of railway line) or north east**

Individual appraisals were conducted of Options 29 to 35, although in this report they are considered jointly by settlement – Braintree, Halstead and Witham. It is assumed that these options would be considered as part of the settlement strategies of urban concentration (Option 17, with Options 18 to 21) and of dispersal (Option 22). The appraisals of those options are relevant to consideration of the options for Directions of Growth, but they are not repeated here (see above).

The scale of any greenfield requirements is still to be determined. At this stage it is not possible to assess whether development would be required at any or all of the possible directions of growth. Further appraisal of the proposed scale and location of the options for direction of growth would be required during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy.

**a) Braintree**

Development to the south west and west of Braintree would offer the opportunity to develop the local economic potential and sustainable transport choices to local jobs and services. However, failure of these opportunities to materialise would result in increased car traffic, particularly to neighbouring centres. Both locations have biodiversity and environmental interest and development would cause visual intrusion, particularly on slopes and skylines. Currently water quality on the River Brain downstream of Rayne sewage treatment works is very poor, leading to ecosystem failure in the river as it flows through Braintree town.

Development to the north east of Braintree would offer less opportunity for developing economic potential and increased use of cars for local journeys would adversely affect cultural heritage and air quality (two potentially significant junctions currently identified east and west of Braintree town centre). The location has biodiversity and environmental interest, with potential for adverse impact on water quality due the proximity of the River Blackwater.

**b) Halstead**

Development would be within the existing built up area and raises similar matters to those discussed in the appraisal of Option 16 (see above).

**c) Witham**

All three directions for growth at Witham have biodiversity and environmental interest and development would cause visual intrusion of open vistas and skylines, as well as being on high quality (Grade 2) agricultural land. Development to the south west and north east of the town would offer the opportunity to develop local economic potential. Each of the locations is accessible to local jobs and services, but development of sustainable transport choices would be required to reduce car travel through the town. Failure to reduce car travel would have an adverse impact on air quality, with two potentially significant junctions already identified in Witham.

**iii) Affordable Housing**

Individual appraisals were conducted of Issues 9 to 16 and their associated Options 36 to 53, although they are considered jointly in this report. The provision of affordable housing would have a positive impact on providing everyone with the opportunity to live in a decent home. Where located close to jobs and services it would also have a positive impact on economic growth, town centres and service provision and the promotion of sustainable transport choices. The District Council has commissioned a Housing Needs Survey to assess housing needs and the proportion of new housing that should be developed for affordable housing. The outcomes of that study will need to be further appraised alongside the preferred settlement strategy to assess the impacts of affordable provision in

terms of overall proportion of dwelling provision, thresholds, need and scale of commuted payments, phasing of provision through the plan period and delivery in rural areas.

## **C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The appraisal of this part of the Issues and Options Document has focused on three matters - existing and vacant employment sites, new strategic employment location(s), and rural employment.

### **i) Existing And Vacant Employment Sites**

A joint appraisal was conducted of Issues 17, 18 and 20, together with their associated Options 54 to 57 and 60 and 61. Existing employment areas are contributing to the economic prosperity and well-being of the District, and are likely to continue making a major contribution to the economy of the District into the future. The concentration of employment in a limited number of employment areas, together with a concentration of jobs in the town centres offers the opportunity to create sustainable transport networks to serve them. Lack of appropriate employment sites would limit economic potential and this, together with dispersal of employment sites, would generate increased car travel.

Vacant employment sites, whether brought back into employment use or reallocated for other uses, could have an adverse impact on local biodiversity and environment, where habitats and species have re-established. Such sites could also have an impact on air and water quality due to contamination, which would require appropriate remedial action to prevent further adverse environmental impact. Some small employment sites within built-up areas may have an adverse impact on adjoining uses, transport and environment. Where employment sites are redeveloped the opportunities for mixed uses should be considered, to encourage sustainable transport choices.

The District Council should undertake an Employment Land Review to assess the extent to which existing employment areas will remain viable and which locations would best support the future economic strategy and business structure of the district. The outcome of the review should be appraised during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy, particularly to assess impacts on the full range of environmental matters and the capability of employment sites to facilitate sustainable movement between home and work.

### **ii) New Strategic Employment Location**

A joint appraisal was conducted of Issue 19 and its associated Options 58 and 59. A new strategic employment location would promote economic growth provided it met future business needs that could not be met on existing sites within the District. A location well related to existing settlements would promote sustainable transport choices; use of town centres and local services; and assist skills development. A greenfield location would have adverse impacts on biodiversity and environmental matters, with impact on air and water quality dependent not only on the site characteristics but also the operations of the site occupiers.

Currently there is no indication of the scale and location of a new strategic employment location. Further appraisal of the proposed scale and location of a new strategic employment location would be required during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy, preferably in association with consideration of an Employment Land Review (see above).

### **iii) Rural Employment**

A joint appraisal was conducted of Issues 21 and 22 and their associated Options 62 to 65. Opportunities for employment in rural areas would assist their prosperity and promotion of sustainable transport by providing more local workplaces. However, employment uses should be compatible with the natural and cultural assets of rural areas and ensure that water and air quality standards are met. The displacement of urban employment uses to the countryside should be avoided because it would encourage increased car travel.

## **D. TRANSPORT**

The appraisal of this part of the Issues and Options Document has focused on one matter – additional car parking in town centres and at main railway stations. Nevertheless, during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy the District Council should discuss with transport authorities and operators a fuller range of transport options to support the preferred settlement strategy.

### **i) Additional Car Parking In Town Centres And At Main Railway Stations**

A joint appraisal was conducted of Issue 23 and its associated Options 66 and 67. Provision of additional car parking in town centres and at main railway stations would improve safety and security in areas where on-street car parking is prevalent. In town centres, if linked to enhancement and regeneration proposals, including pedestrianisation, it would improve the viability and vitality of those centres. However, improved provision of car parking would encourage car use and fail to promote more sustainable transport choices. It could also support continued long distance out-commuting by rail to the detriment of the economic prosperity of the District. Additional car parking at these locations would concentrate traffic movement into specific local routes and areas, thus adversely impacting on safety and air quality. They would also adversely affect the street scene and natural and cultural assets.

## **E. TOWN CENTRES AND RETAILING**

The appraisal of this part of the Issues and Options Document has focused on four matters – the role of the town centres and the options for the future strategy for each of the three town centres of Braintree, Halstead and Witham. Individual appraisals were conducted of the Issues and Options for each centre, that is Issue 24 with Options 68 to 71 for Braintree; Issue 25 with Options 72 to 75 for Halstead; and Issue 26 with Options 76 to 78 for Witham. In this report the three centres are considered jointly and individually.

### **i) Role of the Town Centres**

The District's main town centres are in the three largest settlements of Braintree, Halstead and Witham. They provide the social and economic focus of their communities but rely mainly on convenience shopping and local services for trade and much retail trade is diverted to larger centres outside the district. This reduces the economic potential of the District and generates increased car traffic.

A positive approach of maintaining and enhancing the viability and vitality of each centre would retain local access to a range of key services. This would promote social inclusion,

support local jobs, reduce the need to travel and provide opportunity for development of sustainable transport choices. All three town centres currently experience air quality impacts at potentially significant junctions and future development and accessibility of the centres would need to be designed to reduce these impacts.

## **ii) Braintree**

Braintree, as the largest town centre in the District, has potential to broaden its retail offer, particularly for comparison goods. Any schemes within or adjoining the town centre would positively impact on the viability and vitality of the centre and enhance its economic potential provided there is no adverse impact on the cultural heritage and sustainable access is available to and within all parts of the centre. The positive impacts on the town centre would be eroded if preference were given to out-of-centre locations for retail development.

Braintree Freeport and Braintree Retail Park adjoin each other and act as a leisure and retail destination, attracting many customers from outside the District. The location has a rail service but expansion, attracting high volumes of car travel, would have an adverse impact on the adjacent A120 junction capacity, with potential air quality issues. Other locations at Braintree do not offer the opportunity for developing sustainable transport choices and would have adverse impact on biodiversity and environmental matters.

## **iii) Halstead**

Halstead has a limited retail offer which serves local shopping needs. The existing role of the town centre needs to be maintained otherwise there would be adverse impacts on access to local services and jobs. Any development of the centre should avoid adverse impact on the cultural heritage. Retail development at an out-of-centre location would generate increased traffic through the town centre, and adversely impact on air quality at a potentially significant junction and on the viability of the town centre.

## **iv) Witham**

Witham has a limited retail offer and range of services that could be enhanced to support a broader local role. This would improve access to local services and jobs and offer the opportunity to develop sustainable transport choices. Any redevelopment or development of the centre should avoid adverse impact on the cultural heritage and promote sustainable access to and within the centre. Car traffic to and through the town centre adversely impacts on air quality, with a potentially significant junction already identified.

## **F. CARBON EMISSIONS AND RENEWABLE ENERGY**

The appraisal of this part of the Issues and Options Document has focused on one matter – Carbon Emissions and Renewable Energy.

### **i) Carbon Emissions and Renewable Energy**

Individual appraisals were conducted of Issues 27 to 34 and their associated Options 79 to 94, although they are considered jointly in this report. Policies to promote reduction of carbon emissions and development of renewable energy sources would have a positive impact on climate change. They would also have a positive impact on air quality, water quality and conserving the biodiversity of the District. However, where measures would

require adaptations to existing buildings they could adversely affect the structural integrity of historic buildings and the visual assets of the cultural heritage and the street scene. The cost of initiatives could impact on the affordability of homes.

Currently there is no indication of the location of potential sites for large scale wind turbines. Further appraisal of proposed locations would be required during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy. In addition, further appraisal of policy targets would be required in the light of the scale, location and mix of sites underlying the preferred settlement strategy.

## **G. SOCIAL, HEALTH AND COMMUNITY ISSUES**

The appraisal of this part of the Issues and Options Document has focused on one matter – provision of health services. Nevertheless, during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy the District Council should discuss with social, health and community bodies a fuller range of options for services and facilities to support the preferred settlement strategy.

### **i) Health Services**

A joint appraisal was conducted of Issue 35 and its associated Options 95 and 96. More provision of health services locally would provide improved access to services for all sections of the community and promote more sustainable transport choices.

## **H. IMPLEMENTATION**

The appraisal of this part of the Issues and Options Document has focused on two matters – phasing of development and planning obligations and standard charges. Nevertheless, during future stages in preparation of the Core Strategy the District Council should discuss its implementation and delivery with the widest possible range of private and public interests. There should be early discussions with service and infrastructure providers to define and identify the full range of needs and opportunities that would influence the identification of a preferred settlement strategy and directions for growth. Options should be further appraised to assess the impact of co-ordinated implementation of the range of measures, especially where delivery of infrastructure provision and release of development locations are mutually dependent. Ultimately, the sustainability of the Core Strategy will not be determined by its policies but by whether those policies are implemented in a mutually reinforcing manner that generates sustainable outcomes.

### **i) Phasing Of Development**

A joint appraisal was conducted of Issue 36 and its associated Options 97 and 98. The phasing of housing development would enable a continuous supply of housing types and affordability for all social groups throughout the plan period. It would also facilitate an integrated and long term sustainable relationship between housing development and local job growth and provision of services and infrastructure. Where development is particularly dependent on the presence of specific infrastructure or services the strategy should ensure co-ordination of implementation and delivery to avoid adverse impacts on sustainability objectives. Long term sustainability is better achieved by coordinated implementation rather than retro-fitting that can cause disruption and require additional initiatives to change established behaviour patterns.

## **ii) Planning Obligations and Standard Charges**

A joint appraisal was conducted of Issue 37 and its associated Options 99 and 100. Appropriate contributions from new development towards the cost of infrastructure and services, and mitigation of adverse impacts, would facilitate progress towards achievement of the sustainability objectives.

#### **4. SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS**

The SEA Directive and Regulations require that an assessment is made of the likely significant effects on the environment.

The options and issues set out in the Issues and Options document are unlikely to lead to large scale significant adverse effects beyond those identified in the appraisal. The degree to which those effects may be reduced or increased will emerge through the further stages in preparation of the Core Strategy.

The key areas with potential for likely significant effects are:

- changes to landscape character;
- protection of biodiversity;
- quality of the historic heritage;
- air quality;
- water quality.

The further preparation of the Core Strategy provides scope for the preferred option strategy, and its supporting policies, to mitigate and reduce these effects. Much will depend on the scale, location and function of any proposed new development locations, which still has to be determined. The greater the alignment between the preferred strategy and the range of detailed policies then the greater prospect of reducing the adverse impacts.

Preparation of the preferred option strategy should be supported by,

- A Draft Monitoring Framework that includes proposed indicators, particularly for the potential significant effects;
- A Draft Implementation Framework that includes a list of necessary infrastructure and service provision and mitigation measures to facilitate implementation of the strategy, together with their delivery timescales.

In October 2005 the European Court of Justice concluded that Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive provides that any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site (a SAC, SPA or Ramsar site) but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, must be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. Though there are no European sites within Braintree District, the Blackwater Estuary SPA, Colne Estuary SPA, Abberton Reservoir SPA and the Essex Estuaries SAC lie within about 10 km of the district's eastern boundary. It is therefore advised that a screening opinion be sought on the need for appropriate assessment of possible effects on nearby European sites.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Issues and Options document sets out a range of realistic issues and options for consultation purposes before development of a preferred option strategy. The issues and options set out in the document are unlikely to lead to large scale significant adverse effects beyond those identified in the appraisal.

The District Council, in considering the responses to the consultation on the Document and preparing the preferred strategy option, is recommended to consider,

- including an environmental dimension in the Vision for the District;
- the alignment between the settlement strategy and the economic and transport strategy for the District;
- the alignment between the spatial strategy for the District and the associated topic-based policies;
- undertaking further appraisal of possible preferred development locations, once the scale and distribution of development arising from commitments and the Urban Capacity Study is known;
- undertaking an Employment Land Review and, subsequently, a further appraisal of possible employment locations;
- undertaking a further appraisal of site options if provision is to be made for large scale wind turbines;
- discussion with transport and service authorities and operators to define infrastructure and services required to support the preferred option strategy;
- the alignment between the preferred option strategy and the requirements for its implementation in a sustainable manner;
- seeking a screening opinion on the need for appropriate assessment of possible effects on nearby European sites under the Habitats Directive.

## **ANNEX A: POLICY DOCUMENTS AND OTHER GUIDANCE**

### **International**

European and international Sustainability Development Strategy  
European Spatial Development Perspective (May, 1999)  
European Community Biodiversity Strategy  
Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice The Sixth Environment Action Programme of the European Community  
Draft European Constitution 2003  
European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised), 1992  
EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC  
EU Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC)  
EU Nitrates Directive  
EU Habitat Directive Council 92/43/EEC  
Waste Framework Directive, Council 75/442/EEC

### **National**

PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development  
PPS3 - Housing  
PPG4 - Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms  
PPS6 - Planning for Town Centres  
PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas  
PPG8 – Telecommunications  
PPS9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation  
PPS10 - Planning for Sustainable Waste Management  
PPG13 - Transport  
PPG14 - Development on Unstable Land  
PPG15 - Planning and the Historic Environment.  
PPG 16 - Archaeology and Planning  
PPG17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation  
PPG19 - Outside Advertisement Control  
PPG21 - Tourism  
PPS22 - Renewable Energy  
PPS23 - Planning and Pollution Control  
PPG24 - Planning and Noise  
PPS25 - Development and Flood Risk  
Development and Flood Risk: A Practice Guide Companion to PPS25, 'Living Guide'

Code for Sustainable Homes – DCLG  
Building a Greener Future: Towards Zero Carbon Development – DCLG  
Water Efficiency In New Buildings – DCLG  
Climate Change: The UK Programme (2001)  
Working with the grain of nature: A biodiversity strategy for England (2002)  
Securing the Future Delivering UK Sustainable Development Strategy (March, 2005)  
The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2003  
Planning Policy Statement 26 Tackling Climate Change Through Planning: The Government's Objectives, Discussion Document, September 2006, TCPA and FOE  
By Design, Urban Design In The Planning System, ODPM, May 2000  
Planning and Access For Disabled People, ODPM, 2003

Disability Rights Commission: Briefing: Inclusive Design – Creating Inclusive Environments.  
Disability Rights Commission Access Statements, Achieving an inclusive environment by ensuring continuity throughout the planning, design and management of buildings and spaces, 2005  
Disability Discrimination Act Codes of Practice  
Building Regulations 2000 (consolidated)  
'Secured by Design' ACPO CPI June 2004  
Rural Strategy, DEFRA, 2004  
UK Biodiversity Action Plan, DEFRA, 1994  
Design and Access Statements. How to write, read and use them, CABE, 2006  
Briefing note: Transforming Our Streets, CABE, 2002  
Briefing note: New Localism and Community Engagements: what it means for public space quality, CABE, 2006  
Safer Places: The Planning System and Crime Prevention, ODPM, Feb 2004  
Building for life: Delivering great places to live, CABE & HBF, 2007  
By Design – A guide for sustainable communities, TCPA, Sept 2004

## **Regional**

Draft East of England Plan, EERA, December 2004  
Draft East of England Plan Report of the Panel, June 2006  
Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to RSS14 East of England Plan, December 2006  
East of England Regional Economic Strategy, EEDA  
A Sustainable Development Framework for the East of England, EERA, 2001  
East of England Capacity Delivery Strategy: Phase One (available at [www.go-east.gov.uk](http://www.go-east.gov.uk))  
Water Resources Strategy for the East of England, Environment Agency  
Our Environment, Our Future – The Regional Environmental Strategy for the East of England, 2003  
Regional Woodland Strategy (available at [www.woodlandforlife.net](http://www.woodlandforlife.net))

## **County**

Essex and Southend on Sea Replacement Structure Plan, April 2001  
Health & Opportunity for the People of Essex – Essex's Local Area Agreement, 2006  
Three Year Strategy Plan 2006-2009, Essex Police Authority and Essex Police  
School Organisational Plan 2006-2011, Essex County Council  
Essex Rural Strategy, Partnership priorities for the future of Rural Essex, The Essex Rural Partnership, July 2005  
Essex Local Transport Plan 2006/2011  
The Essex and Southend Waste Local Plan, 2001  
Minerals Local Plan Adopted First Review, Essex County Council, November 1996  
Essex Biodiversity Action Plan  
Essex Design Guide, Essex County Council  
The Urban Place Supplement, Essex County Council and EPOA  
Vehicle Parking Standards, Essex Planning Officers Association, August 2001  
Shaping the future of Essex – A Community Strategy 2004-2024, Essex Partnership, 2004  
North Essex Catchment Flood Management Plan – Environment Agency (in preparation)  
Mid-Essex Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (in preparation)  
Blackwater and Colne Estuarine Strategy, Environment Agency  
Integrating Biodiversity into Development – Essex Biodiversity Project (available at [www.wildlifeandplanningessex.org.uk](http://www.wildlifeandplanningessex.org.uk))

## **Local**

Braintree District Local Plan Review, Braintree District Council, 2005

A Community Strategy for Braintree – District of Tomorrow, Braintree Partnership

Braintree District Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008, Braintree District Community Safety Partnership

Braintree District Rural Policy and Action Statement, Braintree District Council, 2005

Braintree District Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan 2005-08, Braintree District Council, 2005

Braintree Landscape Character Assessment, 2006

Braintree District Council – Affordable Housing SPD

Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Maldon and Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessments, Chris Blandford Associates, September 2006

Braintree District Futures 2025 Final Report for Braintree District Council, Cambridge Econometrics, October 2006

Braintree District Council Statutory Contaminated Land Strategy Framework Document