THE LOCAL PLAN

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2019

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THE STORY SO FAR:

Every council has to plan for additional new homes.

Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council have been working together since 2015 to make sure development is beneficial for North Essex. This resulted in a draft strategic Section 1 Local Plan which is shared by all three councils within their Local Plans. The Section 1 Local Plan includes policies on cross boundary issues including infrastructure and housing. It also includes proposals for three new garden communities.

The Local Plan has undergone a number of rounds of public consultation and was submitted to the Secretary of State in October 2017. A Planning Inspector was appointed to carry out an independent examination to look at Section 1 of the Local Plans and examination sessions were held in January 2018 and May 2018.

Following the hearings, the Planning Inspector wrote to the councils to say he agreed with the councils’ figures for housing growth up until 2033. This means at least 2,186 homes need to be built across North Essex each year.

That means:
- 716 each year in the Braintree District
- 920 each year in the Colchester Borough
- 550 each year in the Tendring District

The Planning Inspector also said that while he commended the councils’ ambitions for high-quality, strategic-scale development in North Essex he raised concerns with some elements of the Local Plan specifically around the garden communities. He suggested further steps that he considered necessary in order for the Section 1 part of the plan to be made sound and legally-compliant.

You can read all correspondence with the Planning Inspector online here: www.braintree.gov.uk/lpexamination

The three councils have been working together to provide more evidence for the Planning Inspector to address his concerns. The Local Plan process was officially paused while this additional evidence was collected.

The additional evidence was published online in June 2019. The evidence has been considered by Braintree District Council’s Local Plan Sub Committee in July 2019. It was approved by Braintree District Council’s Full Council in August 2019.

The evidence was also approved by elected members at Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council.

The evidence is now out to public consultation until 5pm on Monday 30th September 2019.

Everyone who has previously made representations on the Section 1 Plan has been informed of the consultation via email or letter but we have also produced this document in order to highlight the consultation to all residents in the district.

After the consultation has closed the Planning Inspector intends to hold further hearing sessions as part of his examination of the soundness and legal compliance of the Section 1 Plan.

Those responding to the consultation are invited to indicate whether they wish to appear at further hearing sessions.

Take a look at page 4 for more details of the consultation.

WHAT IS A LOCAL PLAN?

A Local Plan is the basis for the future development of homes, employment, business and much more. Planning applications, whatever their size and proposed use, are assessed against the policies contained in the Local Plan.

Having a Local Plan is really important because it sets the direction for future development but it also gives us more power to stop inappropriate development.

Local Plans are not just about new homes but must ensure that housing growth is supported by infrastructure, jobs and community facilities.

THE LOCAL PLAN

Section 2 relates to sites for development, housing, employment, regeneration solely in the Braintree District. The examination for Section 2 will follow.
Braintree, Colchester and Tendring have a legal requirement to provide for more than 2,000 homes each year. There are limited ‘brownfield’ sites available, so the options are effectively either allowing towns and villages to continue to expand, which is not particularly sustainable and has a big impact on services and infrastructure or look at creating new communities.

It is less sustainable to keep adding large scale housing developments on the edges of our urban areas. These are for the most part small market towns and villages with limited capacity in terms of shops, services and transport links and they are not capable of dealing with unlimited population increases. The garden communities, which would be built over 40-50 years, are the long-term strategy of the three North Essex councils, in partnership with Essex County Council, to help meet the future growth of the area in a more strategic way.

The three garden communities (West of Braintree up to 13,500 homes, Colchester/Braintree borders up to 24,000 homes and Tendring/Colchester borders up to 9,000 homes) are an opportunity to plan for infrastructure in a more joined up, considered and comprehensive way. Residents are rightly concerned about their access to education, health care and transport. The garden communities offer the chance to plan all this in from the start, an active, inclusive whole community built with today’s modern requirements in mind. This would mean essential facilities are available as communities grow rather than delivered late, in a piecemeal way, or never provided.

If the garden communities are not progressed, then those homes – both now but more crucially in future years – will need to be built elsewhere within North Essex.

WHAT CONSULTATIONS HAVE ALREADY TAKEN PLACE?

The Local Plan has been a chance for the whole community to talk about the housing, employment and infrastructure we need. These are the consultations carried out:

- 2014 Call for Sites
- 2015 Issues and Scoping consultation – 1,450 responses back
- 2016 Draft Local Plan consultation – more than 3,000 responses back.
- 2017/18 Issues and Options consultation for each of the garden communities – more than 700 responses back.

This will most likely be by expanding our towns and villages. The garden communities make a relatively small contribution to the current Local Plan but every five years the Local Plan must be rolled forward and more homes need to be provided. The continued expansion of our existing towns and villages is unsustainable and by making decisions now we are securing the long term growth of the district for the benefit of all residents.
**THE CONSULTATION**

**TECHNICAL SECTION 1 EXAMINATION 2019**

This consultation is on the additional evidence requested by the Planning Inspector. Detailed proposals will come later, reflecting the needs of each garden community.

**WE ARE CONSULTING ON THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:**

- **Additional Sustainability Appraisal**
  This is an assessment of the environmental effects, and social and economic issues of policies, proposals and alternative strategies, used to inform the preparation of the Local Plan.

- **Habitats Regulations Assessment North Essex Authorities Strategic S1 Local Plan**
  This is an assessment of the likely effects of development proposed in the Local Plan on wildlife sites of European importance for example the Blackwater Estuary.

- **Modal Share Strategy for the North Essex Garden Communities**
  This is a document looking at the way people can be influenced to travel using alternatives to the car.

- **Infrastructure Order of Costs Estimate**
  A review of the cost of infrastructure works associated with the development of homes and jobs across the three new garden communities in North Essex.

- **Build Out Rates at the Garden Communities**
  This document reviews evidence and publications which explore how to boost housing building rates and evidence on high build out rates which have been achieved in other parts of the country.

- **Delivery Mechanisms Position Statement**
  This is a document looking at the available delivery mechanisms for the garden communities.

- **Section 1 Viability Assessment Update**
  This is a document which tests the economic viability of garden community proposals taking into consideration updated cost and value assumptions and including the costs of the Rapid Transit Study.

- **State Aid Position Statement**
  A brief summary of the application of state aid law to the North Essex garden community proposals.

- **Employment Provision for the North Essex Garden Communities**
  This is a document which sets out the amount of employment land required at each garden community.

- **Infrastructure Planning, Phasing and Delivery**
  This report demonstrates the phased manner in which infrastructure will be delivered alongside new homes at the garden communities.

- **North Essex Rapid Transit System: from Vision to Delivery**
  This explains how a high quality, frequent and rapid public transport system could be created.

- **Proposed Amendments to the Section 1 Plan**
  The North Essex Authorities have also compiled a table of proposed amendments to the Section 1 Plan which aim to address certain issues identified by the Planning Inspector, partners and consultees.

All these documents can be viewed online at www.braintree.gov.uk/NEAtechS1

You can have your say by registering on our online portal and giving your comments on the documents.

www.braintree.gov.uk/consultnea

Find out more visit www.braintree.gov.uk/NEAtechS1

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The evidence is now out to public consultation until 5pm on Monday 30th September 2019.

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