

# **Braintree District Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment**

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# 1. Introduction

## Purpose

1.1 This is the first Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for Braintree District. This assessment, which is a requirement set out in the Government's *Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3)*, identifies sites that have development potential for housing over the period up to 2026. It forms part of the evidence base, which supports the Local Development Framework.

1.2 The form of this SHLAA is based on the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments Practice Guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in July 2007.

1.3 The purpose of the SHLAA is to identify sites with potential for housing, assess their housing potential and consider if and when they are likely to be developed. This will assist the Council's decision making in respect of growth locations and housing allocations in Local Development Documents. It will help to ensure that land availability is not a constraint on the delivery of housing needed to meet the district housing requirement, set out in the East of England Plan, adopted in 2008.

1.4 It is important to note that the SHLAA provides evidence to support decision making; it does not determine which sites should be developed for housing. Potential sites identified through the SHLAA will be tested through the plan making process for Development Plan Documents, by way of Sustainability Appraisal, public consultation, and independent examination. Inclusion of a site in the SHLAA does not mean that site will be allocated; moreover the non-inclusion of a site in the SHLAA does not prevent a site being considered further.

1.5 The SHLAA will assess future housing supply against a short term target for a five year supply, and a longer term target of a fifteen year supply for the Local Development Framework. PPS3 requires Local Planning Authorities to identify sufficient specific, deliverable sites to deliver housing in years 1-5, and developable sites in years 6-10 and where possible 11-15. Broad locations of growth have been identified where needed.

1.6 The base date of the assessment is April 2009. As at 2009, the assessment for the five year supply requirement relates to the period April 2010-March 2015. In the Local Development Framework, the Council needs to plan for sufficient housing for a period of 15 years from the date of adoption of the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is planned to be adopted in 2011, which means the assessment will examine the period up to 2026.

1.7 The East of England Plan requires the District to make a minimum dwelling provision of 7,700 dwellings between 2001 and 2021. For the period 2021-2026, the District should plan for provision of an annual average of 385 dwellings.

1.8 The SHLAA is intended to be a “living document” and will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to demonstrate that a rolling supply of deliverable and developable housing sites is available over the short, medium and long term.

1.9 The purpose of this report is to explain the methodology and to set out the initial findings of the Assessment.

1.10 The table below sets out the annual net housing supply achieved 2001-2009 and the outstanding housing required to meet the East of England Plan target.

**Table 1 Housing Land Requirement**

East of England Plan target for Braintree District 2001-2021	7,700
Roll forward at RSS annual rate of 385 dwellings per annum 2021-2026	1,925
= East of England Plan target for Braintree 2001-2026	9,625
Braintree Annual net housing supply achieved 2001-2009:	
2001-2002	647
2002-2003	659
2003-2004	854
2004-2005	693
2005-2006	507
2006-2007	658
2007-2008	628
2008-2009	338
Total:	4984
Outstanding requirement for Braintree District 2009-2026	4641

1.11 The SHLAA consists of this introduction, which describes the process undertaken and summarises the results, together with schedules, which provide site by site details of the assessment for each sub-area examined. A set of maps indicate the location of the individual sites and of the growth locations, and each site record includes a location plan. Individual site assessments are included for sites with an estimated capacity of 10 or more dwellings. These assessments examine the deliverability/developability of sites; whether the sites are suitable, available and achievable (the definition of these terms is set out in Stage 7 of the DCLG SHLAA Practice Guidance) and estimate when a site is realistically expected to be developed.

1.12 Braintree District is within the East of England Region and geographically is the second largest district in Essex. The mid-year population estimate for 2008 was 142,100 and just over half of this population live in the three main towns of Braintree, Halstead and Witham. The six largest villages in the District all have populations of over 3,000 persons and are referred to as Key Service Villages in the draft Core Strategy.

### **Stage 1 Planning the Assessment**

1.13 This study relates solely to land within Braintree District. A joint Housing Market Assessment was carried out for the local authorities of Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester and published in February 2008. The timescales for the preparation of local development documents and evidence for each local authority differ, so the preparation of a joint SHLAA was not practicable and it was therefore decided that Braintree would not prepare its SHLAA in partnership. However these authorities, as well as other adjoining authorities and the Housing Market Partnership will be consulted on the Braintree SHLAA, to try and achieve consistency across the County and sub region.

1.14 The SHLAA is being prepared by a project team within the District Development Department at Braintree District Council. A draft SHLAA will be published for consultation purposes. The draft SHLAA and comments received will be scrutinised by the Council's Local Development Framework Panel. The Panel will decide what amendments should be made to the SHLAA and approve the final document, as part of the LDF evidence base.

1.15 The Council intends to integrate the SHLAA with the preparation of the Braintree District Local Development Framework, including the progression of the Allocations Document. The Allocations document sets out detailed allocations for housing, employment, retail and other major land uses. Work commenced on the Allocations Document in September 2007. During the preparation of the Core Strategy and Allocations Document, the Council has received many representations proposing development sites, which landowners and developers wished the Council to consider. (These are listed on the Planning Policy webpage of the Council's website.) The assessment of whether to include these sites in the SHLAA followed the criteria set out in Stage 2 below.

### **Stage 2 Determining which sources of sites will be included in the Assessment\***

1.16 The assessment **includes** the following sources of supply:-

- Existing housing allocations in the Braintree District Local Plan Review, which had not been developed by April 2009.
- Unimplemented/ outstanding planning permissions for housing.
- Planning permissions for housing that are under construction.

- Two vacant regeneration sites (designated as employment policy areas in the Braintree District Local Plan Review), which the Council has proposed for regeneration, in the draft Core Strategy, with mixed use redevelopment for housing and employment. (At Sible Hedingham and Silver End Key Service Villages).
- Previously developed land and vacant employment sites, which are no longer fit for purpose in the 3 towns and 6 key service villages. (Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon, Sible Hedingham and Silver End)
- Surplus public sector land/ buildings.
- Some land in non-residential use that is suitable for redevelopment for housing, where this is not required for future employment purposes.
- Additional housing opportunities in established residential areas.
- Rural exception sites.
- Greenfield sites in the 3 towns and 6 key service villages, which would be a logical rounding off of these settlement boundaries.
- Proposed growth locations, set out in the draft Core Strategy, north-west of Braintree, south-west of Witham and to the north-east of Witham.

1.17 The schedule of large sites, with accompanying plans, sets out details of sites with a capacity of 10 dwellings or more. Small sites of less than 10 are included, which have outstanding planning permissions for housing.

1.18 The assessment **excludes** the following sources of supply:

- Greenfield sites which are outside the current development boundaries of settlements, (other than rounding off of the three main towns and the six key service villages and the proposed growth locations and rural affordable housing exception sites.).
- Sites in other settlements not identified as growth locations or key service villages. This is because the Core Strategy seeks to encourage the majority of its growth in major settlements and time and budgetary constraints restrict the number of sites that can be assessed.
- New free standing settlements as they do not comply with the spatial strategy proposed by the Core Strategy
- Windfalls as deliverability is uncertain.

- Sites with identified constraints that are not considered to be achievable. This may include sites significantly effected by flooding or with wildlife or other natural constraints such as SSSI status. Where only part of a site is affected the developable area was reduced.
- Sites required for future employment purposes to encourage more sustainable travel patterns as outlined in the Core Strategy.
- Sites required for community purposes, including education, recreation, allotments and open space.
- Sites where the evidence base indicates significant barriers to development. For example where the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) indicates problems with sewage and water supply in the area.

### **Stage 3 Desktop Review of Existing Information**

#### 1.19 Sources of information:

- Braintree District Local Plan Review allocations
- The Urban Capacity Study (2007), which sought to identify potential development sites in the three main towns and six largest villages in the District.
- Annual residential land availability survey of the District
- Employment Land Review
- Ordnance survey maps
- Safeguarding records
- Evidence base – Landscape Character Assessments, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Water Cycle Study etc.
- Aerial photographs
- Sites which were submitted to the Council for land to be considered for residential development were also included in a preliminary list of sites to be assessed. (Not all of these sites have been included in the SHLAA.)

### **Stages 4 -7 Determining which sites and areas should be surveyed, carrying out the survey, estimating housing potential and assessing when and whether sites will be developed, their suitability, availability and achievability.**

1.20 Potential sites were visited, development progress was assessed and constraints to development were noted.

1.21 The locations of all sites of estimated capacity of over 10 dwellings were mapped and a schedule drawn up identifying constraints. Sites were eliminated where constraints meant that these were unlikely to be achievable as outlined in paragraph 1.18. These sites are listed in Appendix 2. Where it was considered that constraints could be overcome in the future, the timescale for development was adjusted accordingly.

1.22 Site ownership was investigated based upon planning histories, submissions of sites to the Council and land registry information. Sites with a large number of owners were excluded, as they were not considered to be achievable for development.

1.23 Site owners and agents of potential SHLAA sites, with an estimated capacity of 10 or more dwellings, were contacted (excluding sites already under construction) and asked to confirm that they owned, or were agents for this land and whether they wanted their sites to be developed for housing. Sites were excluded from the SHLAA where owners indicated that they did not want their land to be developed during the plan period: These excluded sites are listed in Appendix 2.

1.24 Housing capacity was based partly upon existing planning approvals and pre-application meetings with agents and developers.

1.25 Site owners and agents were also asked to give an estimate of dwelling capacity and proposed timing of development. However, some suggested timings, where it was suggested that development would commence within a short timescale, did not seem to be realistic. In these cases, the timings have been reviewed by planning officers to ensure that they are realistic and allow sufficient time for approval of the Allocations Document/ planning permission, as required.

1.26 Planning Development Control officers were consulted on the suitability, capacity, constraints and timing of all the potential large SHLAA sites, apart from those sites which already had planning approval.

1.27 Where owners or agents were unable to estimate the site capacity, this was estimated by the planning survey team, based upon the density of adjoining housing areas, the character of the area, identified site constraints and the sustainability of the location. Site viability

### **Stages 8 and 9 Review of the Assessment and Identifying and Assessing Housing Potential of Broad Locations**

1.28 An initial review of the amount and timing of housing development that could come forward on SHLAA sites, other than broad growth locations, was undertaken prior to the publication of the Core Strategy Preferred Options. This indicated that there was a shortfall of housing supply that was required to meet the Regional Strategy requirement for Braintree District. Broad growth locations were identified in the Core Strategy Preferred Options, which provided a total of 1400 dwellings. It was intended that the housing provision

identified in the growth locations could be increased or decreased if necessary when the final results of the SHLAA were available.

1.29 A further review of the supply identified in the draft SHLAA has confirmed that a total of 1400 dwellings in the growth locations is sufficient to meet the housing requirement. The proposed phasing of these greenfield growth locations has been included within the draft SHLAA. Development of these new growth locations is phased towards the latter part of the plan period, to ensure that there is a rolling five year housing land supply throughout the plan period. This timing will allow time for the approval of masterplans and provision of infrastructure in these locations and is aimed to provide a realistic annual rate of development, which can be realistically marketed.

### **Stage 10 Determining the Housing Potential of Windfalls**

1.30 The SHLAA is based upon specific sites and broad growth locations. It does not include a windfall allowance.

### **Consultation on the Draft SHLAA**

1.31 Consultation was undertaken in respect of the draft SHLAA with the Housing Market Partnership and key stakeholders. A list of persons and organisations who were consulted is set out in Appendix 1. The draft SHLAA was made available on the Council's website.