

To Consider the Size of the Proposed Growth Location West of the A131 at Great Notley

Portfolio Area: Cllr Harley Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Culture
Report Presented by: Eleanor Dash Planning Policy Manager

Background Papers: One District – One Vision A Draft Strategy for People and Places in the Braintree District to 2025 (October 2008), Employment Land Review, Braintree District Settlement Fringe Landscape Capacity Analysis for Braintree and Environs (November 2007), Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal (April 2007).

Corporate Implications: Please refer to table at end of report

Options:

- 1 – To keep the size of the Great Notley Growth Location as 12.5 ha.
- 2 – To increase the size to 18.5ha
- 3 – To increase the size to 37.5ha.
- 4 – To increase the size by another amount.

Risks:

Under- provision of employment land could result in increased out-commuting from the District.

Providing too much additional land could result in pressure to develop vacant, or existing employment sites for other uses, leading to a loss of potential brownfield employment sites.

Too much employment land could adversely affect the capacity of the road network, particularly the A120 junction.

Executive Summary

The draft Core Strategy set out a proposed employment growth location of 12.5ha on land west of the A131 at Great Notley. The growth location was limited to 12.5ha on the advice of Essex Highways, because of its potential impact on the road network.

A Transport Appraisal undertaken on behalf of the developers suggests that this location could accommodate up to 37.5ha. employment land. Essex Highways have agreed that it could accommodate more than 12.5ha, but that the suggested maximum of 37.5ha is not appropriate, because of the potential effect on the A120 junction.

A greenfield employment growth location that is too large could have an adverse effect upon the redevelopment of vacant brownfield employment land for new employment. It could also lead to pressure for redevelopment of existing employment land for other uses, which could reduce the provision of jobs in more sustainable locations.

It is recommended that the growth location is increased to 18.5 ha, as this will make up the amount of employment land provision that was deleted from the Core Strategy when the 6 ha Eastways growth location was removed.

Decision

It is RECOMMENDED that the proposed employment growth location on land west of the A131 at Great Notley should be increased in size from 12.5 ha to 18.5 ha.

Introduction

The Draft Core Strategy proposes a 12.5ha Business Park (restricted to B1/B2 uses) situated on land west of the A131 at Great Notley. It is recognised that a need exists to develop a specialist business/innovation park between now and 2025, as proposed by the Braintree District Futures 2025 and the Mid Essex Economic Futures studies, both of which support a “knowledge based economy” approach for the District.

Summary of Great Notley Growth Location Submission

Andrew Martin Associates acting on behalf of Countryside Properties Ltd submitted two different proposals for the area in 2007, which they refer to as the Great Notley Campus. Plans of these options are set out towards the end of this report and will be available in colour at the Panel meeting.

Option 1

Employment	10 ha	25 acres
Residential	8 ha	20 acres
College	4 ha	10 acres
Leisure	1 ha	3 acres
Hotel	1 ha	2 acres
Total	24 ha	

Plus landscaping, woodlands, wetlands and cycleways.

Option 2

Employment	14 ha	35 acres
Residential	4 ha	10 acres
Leisure	1 ha	3 acres
Hotel	1 ha	2 acres
College	4 ha	10 acres
Total	24 ha	

Plus landscaping, woodlands, wetlands and cycleways.

Vehicular access was proposed through the provision of a fourth arm to be added to the west of the existing Cuckoo Way (Tesco) roundabout, (currently a three arm roundabout) with a revision to the existing access to the electricity sub-station.

The agent’s submission in 2007 suggested that the Great Notley Campus would provide an ideal location for a possible education use and that the site had been put forward to Braintree College, as one of two possible options for their relocation by their agents.

Subsequently, the College stated that their preferred location was on land west of Panfield Lane and the Council therefore did not include this use as part of the growth location proposal in the ‘One District- One Vision’ draft Core Strategy.

The Council did not support the provision of a mixed use development in this location in the draft Core Strategy , because it was not well related to the main urban area of Braintree, for access to services. (It was a less sustainable location than other growth locations proposed for residential development, which were more accessible to town centres and railway

stations. The A131 also acts as a physical barrier to linkage with Great Notley, with limited cross-over points for walking and cycling.)

The Council were advised by the Highways Authority that a proposed size of development of around 25 hectares of employment development was likely to generate significant volumes of trips, which would be expected to cause strain on the road network in the locality. The proposed growth location put forward in the draft Core Strategy was therefore reduced to 12.5 hectares in order to reduce the potential impact upon the road network.

The Council, Essex Highways and the Highways Agency jointly commissioned Mouchel to undertake a Highways Assessment of the proposed growth locations. This report stated that advice given by Essex Highways indicated that the growth location would be accessed via a left-in and left-out priority junction from the A131, midway between its junction with London Road and Cuckoo Way.

However, Countryside Properties commissioned a Strategic Transport Appraisal of the land west of the A131 at Great Notley by Colin Buchanan, which stated that this growth location could be increased to up to 37.5 ha of employment development, without adversely affecting the operation of the adjoining road network. This proposed that access should be gained via an additional arm to the existing A131 Cuckoo Way (Tesco) roundabout . Countryside Properties therefore proposed that the growth location should be increased to 37.5 ha , with a minimum of 12.5 ha to be released at the beginning of the plan period to ensure that there is a sufficient deliverable land supply going forward. The release of the remainder would be phased. Countryside Properties also requested that the allocation should include other employment uses such as B8, hotel and leisure uses.

Essex Highways have agreed that this revised access arrangement could accommodate some additional development over that tested in the Mouchel Report, should the Council wish to allocate it. However, Essex Highways suggest that the maximum development size suggested by Countryside (37.5 ha) is not appropriate, given competing demands on the A120 junction, from proposed new development to the north. (Springwood/Panfield Lane growth location.)

Comments made concerning the Great Notley Growth Option

Various comments were received about the Great Notley Growth Location during the public consultation on the draft Core Strategy. These comments have previously been considered by the Local Development Framework Panel and are summarised below:-

Objections

- Developing a greenfield business park related to growth of Stansted Airport is not sustainable. The Council is opposed to the growth of Stansted Airport.
- The 12.5ha proposed allocation on land to the west of the A131 at Great Notley should be increased due to inaccuracies in the Mouchel's transport assessment from which this figure was derived.
- Site should not be restricted to B1-B2. Residential, B8 uses should be considered for the proposed site, hotel and public house to support Stansted and leisure and tourism industry
- The Council should consider if B1 office use can be located closer to Braintree town, offering the opportunity to minimise transport movements.
- The development will have an impact on Great Notley Country Park.
- It does not extend over land off London Rd / Bakers Lane, Great Notley.
- Lacks infrastructure for access for workers and could be visually intrusive.

- Concern about the negative impact on the Great Notley Country Park, however, suggest some potential mitigation measures if development goes ahead.
- Objection to employment location on grounds of unsustainable access for workers.
- Already too much development around Great Notley.
- Growth location is pushing the built up area westwards outside the boundary set by the new A131.
- Broomhills and Springwood Drive are a disgrace and should be modernised rather than industrialise the area southwest of the A131.
- Impact on Country Park (some potential measures suggested to mitigate impacts if development goes ahead)
- Concern over the location and extent of the proposal
- Concern regarding the sustainability of the site- poor rail linkages/cycle and pedestrian routes
- Need a better balance between homes and jobs and to encourage accessibility of development to public and non-car transport
- Promotion of alternative sites
- Lacks appropriate infrastructure
- Concern about precedent set by this growth area and impact of locating offices outside town centre that will adversely affect vitality of town centre
- Economic strategy appears to be land rather than jobs led
- Strategy is over reliant on existing allocated employment land.

Support

- The land to west of A131 at Great Notley offers excellent accessibility to primary road network, A131 and A120.
- New business/innovation Park at Great Notley could assist with tackling the local job deficiencies.
- Land to the west of the A131 at Great Notley is the only site that is likely to be capable of delivering employment in the short term. Without an early release of land, the opportunity to create a strategic employment location of regional significance could then be lost.
- Uses on the site should not be limited and should include housing, B8, warehousing use, hotel and public house to support Stansted and leisure and tourism industry

The Local Development Framework Panel considered these comments and recommended to Council that:-

1. That the proposed employment growth location at land to the west of the A131 at Great Notley be retained, but warehousing type development discouraged.
2. That a significant landscape buffer be provided between the Country Park and the employment area
3. That advice be sought from Essex County Highways on the size of the site that could be developed based upon the junction capacity,
4. That the Core Strategy be amended to include tourism and hotel use on the site.

The recommendations of the LDF Panel were approved by the Council on the 22nd June.

Employment Land Requirements

The East of England Plan policy E1 sets out indicative targets for net growth in jobs between 2001 and 2021. It states that Local Development Documents should provide an enabling context to achieve these targets. Braintree is included in the Central and North Essex sub-

region with Harlow, Uttlesford, Chelmsford and Maldon, with a sub-regional target of a net increase of 42,000 jobs. This is not sub-divided into requirements for each District.

The Employment Land Review proposed that the Council should plan for demand for employment development based upon 3-5ha per year across the plan period. They also propose that specific sites be identified for at least seven years, to reflect a five-year supply plus a two year margin. The report also refers to the recently completed A120 improvements between Braintree and Stansted. It states 'It may be that the combination of airport related expansion at Stansted and a very good link road will generate a step change in demand for B1-8 floorspace in the A120 corridor. If so, there is a case for a forward looking plan to make provision for this eventuality. This would be in the form of ...designation of.... a new business park adjacent to the A120 that could come on stream in, say, five-years time should there be insufficient currently allocated land at Great Notley and Springwood to meet burgeoning demand.'

The draft Core Strategy proposed that the Council should provide for up to 14,000 new jobs, and provide 66 ha of employment land, which would provide for a minimum of 3 ha of employment land per year and would ensure there was seven years supply of employment land at all times.

In 2007 there were 32.5ha of vacant employment land in the District already allocated for employment development. The Core Strategy therefore allocated a further 33.5 ha of employment land, which was made up of :-

12.5 ha west of A131 Great Notley

15 ha Panfield Lane/ Springwood, Braintree

6 ha north-east of Eastways, Rivenhall.

Following a recommendation from Witham Local Committee, the LDF Panel on 20th May recommended that the Council should delete the proposed employment allocation of 6ha at Eastways. Witham Members were concerned about its prominence in the landscape and that it would extend built development along the A12, which would be difficult to screen. They recognised that the Council could reduce its employment land provision and still provide 3 ha of employment land per year, as recommended by the Employment Land Review. The Council resolved to delete this employment growth location on 22nd June.

Witham had 36% of the District total of existing employment floorspace in 2007 and it is not therefore essential to increase this provision to ensure that employment opportunities are available in the town. It also had 14.5 ha of vacant or allocated employment land in 2007, (excluding the proposed growth location) which included the undeveloped business park at Maltings Lane, which can meet future employment needs in the town.

The deletion of this proposed 6 ha employment growth location does not mean that the Council must provide this amount of employment land elsewhere, either west of the A131 at Great Notley, or anywhere else. Paragraph 5.18 of the Draft Core Strategy states that the provision of a minimum of 3 ha of employment land throughout the plan period (as recommended in the Employment Land Review) would require 57ha of employment land to be allocated, of which 32.5ha has already been identified. The Council has extended the plan period to 2026, which increases the requirement to 60ha. The balance of new employment land required would be 27.5ha. The Core Strategy already makes that allocation with 15 ha at Panfield Lane/ Springwood and 12.5ha west of Great Notley. However, it is likely that objectors to the Core Strategy who wish to promote employment sites in the District will suggest that the Core Strategy is not sound because it does not provide enough employment land, in the case of some sites being delayed or not coming forward as expected.

Sustainability Appraisal

Sustainability Appraisals (SA) are a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The SA comments for the Great Notley growth area can be summarised as follows;

The SA for the Great Notley growth location indicates that the area provides good access to the strategic road network, Stansted airport and the sub-regional centre at Chelmsford. It does however warn of a dependency on car use if public transport is not fully integrated into the development though other uses in the area should help facilitate this.

The proposed use of the area as a B1/B2 business park could increase inward investment in Braintree and provide additional employment opportunities and make up for existing shortfalls in financial and business services, IT and transport and communications. The proposal would contribute to a more balanced employment structure for the area.

The Country Park to the north would limit the type of employment suitable to operate in this area. Also any development would be expected to have a minimal impact on the site in terms of visual amenity and the preservation of natural habitats. The SA does highlight the need for drainage and sewage improvements to enable the development to take place.

Landscape Capacity

The Landscape Character Assessment identifies that the proposed growth location at Great Notley is situated within the Felsted Farmland Plateau where the views are open / panoramic across the farmland and the variation in the nature of the view is dictated by the trees. The area is evaluated as having high landscape character sensitivity overall resulting from substantial semi-natural vegetation lining the A131 and within Great Notley Country Park. However, it is recognised that the sensitivity of the area has been reduced by traffic movement and by large scale commercial and office development east of area between A131/A120 road corridors. It is stated in the Landscape Fringe Assessment that the area forms an important contribution to wider landscape recreational facilities and semi-natural habitats associated with Great Notley Country Park. In summary it is stated in the Landscape Fringe Assessment that new residential and employment could be accommodated within open/large scale fields, providing that a new and substantial structure of tree and shrub planting is developed in these parts of the setting area and setting of listed buildings at Slampseys Farm.

Water Cycle Study

The Water Cycle Study has highlighted problems in providing infrastructure for sewage disposal for sites to the west of Braintree, which may require a lead in period in order to provide sewerage infrastructure. This would also affect other growth locations to the west of Braintree. It will be necessary to phase development for water infrastructure to be completed.

Conclusion

This report relates to the size of the employment area at Great Notley only. The other elements of the Council's decision made on 22nd June and as set out above still apply.

The draft Core Strategy set out a proposed employment growth location of 12.5ha on land west of the A131 at Great Notley. The approximate extent of this location is shown on the plan at the end of this report; access would be from the Cuckoo Way roundabout. The growth location was limited to 12.5ha on the advice of Essex Highways, because of its potential impact on the road network.

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It is recommended that the growth location is increased to 18.5 ha. (Approximate extent is shown on the plan at the end of this report). This will make up the amount of employment land provision that was deleted from the Core Strategy when the 6 ha Eastways growth location was removed.

Corporate Implications				
Financial:	Development and infrastructure costs.			
Legal:	LDF Planning Policy Guidance and Regulations			
Equalities & Diversity:	N/A			
Customer Impact:	Future commercial occupiers of growth locations. Needs of future commercial properties.			
Environment & Climate Change:	New employment development at Growth Locations will be expected to be designed to minimize impacts of climate change and help to reduce unsustainable out- commuting from the District.			
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Local Committees	Y	Partners	Y
	Public	Y	Staff	
Key Decision:	No			
Public/Private Report:	Public			
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Proposed Layout Submitted by Countryside in 2007 Option 1



Proposed Layout Submitted by Countryside in 2007 Option 2



Land West of A131 Great Notley Growth Location Size Options

Great Notley Growth Option



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