

Braintree District Council
Local Development Framework and Review of Community Strategy

Braintree District 2025 Issues and Options Document



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1 Introduction

- 1.1** The 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. Wherever possible the Council is combining the work on the different documents. In 2006 the Council held a series of consultation events in order to seek the views of a wide range of people on the issues that were important to them and their aspirations for the future. We also distributed a leaflet and questionnaire to all households and businesses in the District to obtain views on the future development of the area. This document now builds on that work by setting out a series of options for the future of the area on which views are invited. **No preferences are expressed in this document and the Council will take all comments into account before deciding on preferred options.**
- 1.2** The first part of the document sets the scene for the new plans: it outlines the main elements of the planning system, it summarises the outcome of the consultation carried out in 2006 and sets out some key information about the District as it is now and which will have an influence on its future development. The document then looks at the overall vision for the future of the District and different strategic options. This is followed by options for a number of specific topic areas including an overall settlement strategy, housing and affordable housing, gypsies and travellers, economic development, transport, town centres and retailing, carbon emissions and renewable energy and social, health and community issues.
- 1.3** This document is accompanied by a separate Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal Report which has been prepared independently by Essex County Council. This assesses the options and issues put forward in this document against sustainability objectives.
- 1.4** Comments are invited on this document, particularly in relation to the issues and options which are highlighted in the text. We would encourage you to make your comments on-line although written representations can also be made on the form provided or by letter.
- 1.5** We are using a new on-line consultation system which offers a number of benefits:
- You can enter your comments as you read through the document by using electronic links within the document
 - You can view comments made by other people once they have been accepted by the Council as duly made
 - If you are an agent you can make separate comments for each of your clients

- You can receive automatic e-mails informing you when new documents are available for consultation
- You can update your own contact details

To register on the on-line system please go to:

<http://consultation.limehouse.co.uk/index.do?identifier=braintree>

or go to the Braintree District Council website at <http://www.braintree.gov.uk> and follow the links.

Written comments should be sent to:

Planning Policy
Braintree District Council
Causeway House
Braintree
Essex
CM7 9HB

All comments must be received by 4pm on 31st May 2007.

If you have any questions about the consultation please contact the Planning Policy Team on 01376 551414 or e-mail planningpolicy@braintree.gov.uk

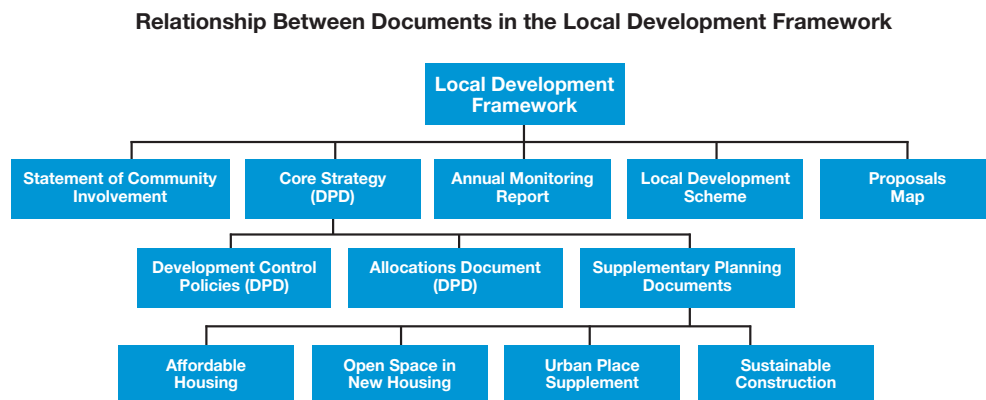
If you would like this document in an alternative format such as large print, braille, audio cassette or another language then please contact the Planning Policy Team.

A fully accessible version of the document can be found on our website at <http://www.braintree.gov.uk>

2 Background

The New Planning System

- 2.1** The requirement for local planning authorities to prepare a local development framework was introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Instead of the previous system of structure plans, local plans and supplementary planning guidance there is a new system of regional spatial strategies prepared by regional planning bodies and local development frameworks prepared by local planning authorities.
- 2.2** A local development framework will be made up of a number of different documents. The documents that make up the local development framework for Braintree are illustrated below.



Picture 2.1 Relationship Between Documents in the Local Development Framework

- 2.3** The Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement have been completed. This document forms part of the work required for the production of the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Document. The Council will use the responses to the consultation on this document to help it prepare a Preferred Options Document that will be published in September 2007. This will also be the subject of consultation before the Council finalises its proposals and submits them to the Government for independent examination. The Core Strategy and Development Control Policies documents are not site specific. Detailed land use proposals will be set out in the Allocations Document on which work will start later this year.

Consultation to Date

2.4 The new planning system involves extensive consultation at the start of the process. To this end the Council carried out a series of consultation events in 2006 and distributed a leaflet and questionnaire to all residents and businesses in the District. Details of the responses received can be viewed on the Council's website at www.braintree.gov.uk

2.5 The top ten priorities for the future that participants in the consultation events voted for were:

- Improve public transport
- Increase energy efficiency
- Improve leisure and recreation opportunities
- Improve policing and community safety
- Provide good quality affordable housing
- Improve sports facilities
- Improve training opportunities
- Provide local employment opportunities
- Provide services locally to reduce the need to travel
- Improve educational facilities and skills levels

Some of these issues can be taken forward through the local development framework and others will be more relevant to the Community Strategy with the Council's partners being responsible for delivery.

2.6 The responses to the District-wide questionnaire and leaflet will be used to inform the Council's decisions on the options set out in this document.

The District to-day

2.7 The characteristics of the District as it is to-day will have a significant bearing on its future. The following information provides a general picture of the District in 2007.

- **Location and General Character**

Braintree is a large, mainly rural District that covers an area of 612 square kilometres. Braintree District covers a large area of mid and north Essex. It stretches from the A12 in the south to the Suffolk border in the north. The northern part of the District is largely rural; the central part of the District is part of the A120 corridor; the southern part of the District is in the A12 corridor and functions as part of mid Essex.

The District lies in a key location between Stansted Airport, the east coast ports, and the key transport routes to London. The nearby regional centres

of Colchester to the north-east, Cambridge to the north west, and Chelmsford to the south are important sources of employment and services for the population of the District. In addition to the local market town facilities in the District, the development of the Freeport retail outlet and leisure centre has provided an attraction serving the District and beyond.

- **Population, Households and Housing Growth (including age structure)**

The population of the District in mid-2005 was 137,800; just over half of the population live in the three main towns of Braintree (population approximately 43,000), Halstead (population approximately 11,000) and Witham (population approximately 23,000).

Braintree District has experienced high levels of housing and population growth in the past. The population of the District grew by nearly 12% over the decade 1995-2005 from 123,300 to 137,800 (source: Office for National Statistics mid-year population estimates), and over the period 1996-2004 the District delivered more new dwellings per annum than any other District in the East of England region (source: EERA Annual Monitoring Reports). The majority of this development has been in the town of Braintree and the surrounding area. The population growth reflects the high levels of migration into the District from other areas; over the past 14 year period population growth from migration has outweighed population growth from natural change (births exceeding deaths) by over 4 to 1. Migration trends have influenced the population age structure; the proportion of the District's population who are of pensionable age is lower than average and the proportion aged under 16 is higher than average.

Mid 2005 population estimates: population age groups (source: Office for National Statistics, 2006)

	Proportion of population who are aged 0-15	Proportion of population who are of "working age"	Proportion of population who are of pensionable age
Braintree District	20.39%	61.61%	18.00%
Essex average	19.43%	60.40%	20.16%
East of England Region average	19.45%	60.99%	19.56%
England average	19.27%	62.12%	18.60%

- **Economic Activity and Prosperity**

House prices are high and are above the average for the East of England. The lower quartile house price average in the first quarter of 2006 was £146,000 in Braintree District compared with a regional average of £140,000 and an England average of £124,995 (source: DCLG website, from Land Registry data). The affordability index, as a ratio of lower quartile house prices to income, was 8.62 in Braintree District compared with a regional average of 8.03 and an England average of 7.12 (source: DCLG website, from Land Registry data).

The condition of the housing stock of the District is good. According to the 2001 Census, 30% of dwellings were detached, 35% were semi-detached; 23% were terraced and 11% were flats.

Unemployment in the District is low, at 1.6% (January 2007) compared with a regional average of 2.0% and a UK average of 2.6% (source: Office for National Statistics Local Labour Market Statistics Local Area Data February 2007). The proportion of the workforce employed in manufacturing is slightly above, and the proportion employed in services is slightly below, the national average, although as with national trends there has been a shift away from manufacturing employment and towards service sector employment. In recent years, housing and population have grown at a faster rate than local employment, and the jobs density (the ratio of jobs to labour supply) is lower in Braintree District (0.71) than the regional (0.81) or UK (0.83) average. There were approximately 72,000 residents of the District in employment, and approximately 60,000 jobs in the District. (Figures as at 2004/2005, from Office for National Statistics Local Labour Market Statistics Local Area Data February 2007).

Net out-commuting has increased, particularly by car, and residents of Braintree town have some of the longest average travel to work distances in the region. The majority of residents travelling to work did so by car (source: 2001 Census).

- **Transport**

There are transport accessibility problems, including congestion on the A120 east of Braintree and the A12; and passenger capacity problems at peak time on main line rail services. There are many dispersed rural settlements in the District where public transport is difficult to provide.

- **Community**

There is a community hospital at Halstead, and two community hospitals at Braintree, which are proposed to be replaced by one new community hospital. There is no community hospital at Witham. The main hospitals serving the District are outside the District at Broomfield near Chelmsford; Colchester and Addenbrookes at Cambridge. The scale of population growth in the District has provided a challenge for services such as local health services.

There are universities in the neighbouring towns of Colchester (Essex University) and Chelmsford (Anglia Ruskin University). For residents of the District, in terms of qualifications at degree level or higher the District ranks 34th out of 54 in the region, and 283rd out of 376 in England and Wales.

Recreational facilities include a country park at Great Notley, swimming pools and leisure centres in all three main towns, and local museums.

Evidence Base

- 2.8** The local development framework must be based on sound information. As part of this the Council has commissioned a number of specialist studies to examine key policy areas to provide a basis for options development and policy making. These studies form a key part of the evidence base for the local development framework. The studies commissioned to date are:
- 2.9** Urban Capacity Study 2007 – this study will provide advice on the potential for accommodating housing development on sites within Braintree, Halstead, Witham, Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Feering, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon, Sible Hedingham and Silver End . It will provide the basis for determining how much of the housing to be provided in the District can be accommodated on previously developed land and how much greenfield land will need to be allocated. The study is expected to be complete in June 2007.
- 2.10** Landscape Character Assessment 2006 – this provides an analysis of the District's landscape and provides guidance on its sensitivity to development.
- 2.11** Retail Study 2006 – this provides a health check of Braintree, Halstead and Witham town centres and an assessment of the capacity of each town to accommodate additional retail development for the period to 2021.
- 2.12** Mid-Essex Economic Futures 2006 – this examines the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy and projects future employment growth and employment land needs.

- 2.13** Looking Back, Moving Forward – Assessing the housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Essex. This provides an assessment of the number of sites that are required in Essex for gypsies and travellers for the period to 2016.
- 2.14** Flood Risk Assessment 2007 – This will provide detailed guidance on areas at risk from flooding in the District and the measures required to mitigate risk. This study is expected to be complete in August 2007.
- 2.15** Housing Needs Study 2007 – This study will provide an assessment of housing needs in the District and the proportion of new housing that should be developed for affordable housing. This study is expected to be complete in June 2007.
- 2.16** Open Space Audit and Greenspace Strategy – 2007. This provides an assessment of the quantity and quality of open space in the District and assesses future requirements and standards.
- 2.17** Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal Baseline Report – the SEA/sustainability appraisal is a continuous process to ensure that the policies and proposals of the Plan have regard to sustainability objectives. A written report is produced at key stages in the process.
- 2.18** Parish and Town Plans, Village Appraisals and Village Design Statements - These community-led plans provide detailed assessments of issues and priorities in individual settlements in the District. A summary report of parish plans completed between 2002 and 2006 will be available shortly.
- 2.19** Rural Services Survey 2005 - This survey provides an audit of key facilities and services in rural villages and will be updated in 2007.
- 2.20** Completed studies are available on the Council's website at www.braintree.gov.uk. Where relevant the studies are referred to in more detail in the sections dealing with options below. Other studies are likely to be commissioned as work on the local development framework progresses.

3 The Overall Vision for Braintree District

- 3.1** It is for the Community Strategy to develop the overall vision for the future development of the District to 2021 and beyond. The local development framework will then take forward those aspects of the vision that have a spatial dimension.
- 3.2** The current vision for the District is taken from the Community Strategy, District of Tomorrow, which was prepared with all the Council's main partners across the District in 2004. The joint vision is to create:
- a District in which everyone is able to access high quality services and means of transport
 - a District in which everyone takes responsibility for making the District a safer, cleaner and healthier place in which to live
 - a prosperous and vibrant District in which everyone is welcome and lives, works and plays together harmoniously
 - a District in which everyone has an opportunity to meet their full potential and participate fully in decisions which affect their communities
- 3.3** Since this vision was adopted there have been a number of significant changes in the context in which the Council and its partners operate, in particular the need for more sustainable development and to respond to climate change. We are therefore seeking to review and update the vision as part of the review of the Community Strategy and the preparation of the local development framework.
- 3.4** In order to assist with this the Council appointed Cambridge Econometrics in 2006 to examine future alternative scenarios for the District. Their report, Braintree District Futures 2025 (October 2006), identified three possible scenarios:
- Business as Usual
 - Providing a Focus on Leisure, Heritage and Nature
 - Where Ideas Take Shape

The main components of these are set out below.

Business as Usual

- 3.5** By 2025, Braintree District will continue to be an attractive place to live, but few of its higher-skilled residents will work there. Rather, the rate of out-commuting will have risen since 2006 and employment growth in the District will have been insufficient to match the population growth associated with the growth area and nearby growth point, leading to Braintree becoming more of a dormitory District.

Providing a Focus on Leisure, Heritage, and Nature

- 3.6** By 2025, Braintree District will be well known for the quality of its leisure and recreation facilities, providing a draw for people from outside the area for shopping, entertainment and longer stays in an attractive rural environment, easily accessible by air, rail, sea and road.

Where Ideas Take shape

- 3.7** By 2025, Braintree will enjoy a strong knowledge-driven economy with high-quality jobs and businesses located in the District and reduced levels of net out-commuting. Strong civic leadership, improved partnership working (with businesses and marketing focused on clearly-defined business sectors) will have helped to encourage both inward investment and the growth of businesses born locally and the District will be seen as a key part of the region's knowledge and innovation economy. The District will enjoy the best of both worlds: excellent national and international communication links, as well as improved confidence and an improved ability to direct its own future.
- 3.8** The Council has made no decision yet on which of these three scenarios should form the basis of the future vision for the District and will consider this further once the outcome of this consultation is known. Furthermore the three scenarios are mainly focused on economic development issues and they require further development to incorporate social, community and environmental issues. Also it may be that different approaches are appropriate in different parts of the District.

Issues for Consultation

Issue 1

Should the current vision for the District be reviewed and updated?

Option 1

The vision should be reviewed and updated

Option 2

The current vision for the District should remain

Issue 2

Are there elements of the current vision that need to be retained?

Option 3

A District in which everyone is able to access high quality services and means of transport

Option 4

A District in which everyone takes responsibility for making the District a safer, cleaner and healthier place to live

Option 5

A prosperous and vibrant District in which everyone is welcome and lives, works and plays together harmoniously

Option 6

A District in which everyone has an opportunity to meet their full potential and participate fully in decisions which affect their communities

Issue 3

Which of the three scenarios identified by Cambridge Econometrics is most appropriate for the District?

Option 7

Business as Usual

Option 8

Providing a Focus on Leisure, Heritage and Nature

Option 9

Where Ideas Take Shape

Issue 4

Are different approaches appropriate in different parts of the District?

Option 10

Yes, different approaches are appropriate in different parts of the District

Option 11

No, different approaches are not appropriate in different parts of the District

Issue 5

Should the vision for the District incorporate sustainable development and a response to climate change?

Option 12

Include sustainable development

Option 13

Include climate change

Issue 6

Should the vision be developed to incorporate social, community and environmental issues?

Option 14

Yes, the vision should be developed to incorporate social, community and environmental issues

Option 15

No, the vision should not be developed to incorporate social, community and environmental issues

4 Settlement Strategy

Background

- 4.1** The settlement strategy for the District must conform to the East of England Plan (EEP) and to Government guidance. The East of England Plan is now at an advanced stage with the Secretary of State having published proposed changes to the Plan in December 2006. New Government guidance on housing (Planning Policy Statement 3 – Housing - PPS3) was also published in November 2006. Together these two documents provide a basis on which to plan the settlement strategy and dwelling provision for the District to 2021. The main requirements of these two documents insofar as they affect the planning of the District to 2021 are:
- the dwelling provision in the East of England Plan for Braintree District for the period 2001 to 2021 is 7,700 dwellings. The required average annual rate for the period 2006 to 2021 is 290 dwellings per year (Policy H1).
 - the figure of 7,700 dwellings is to be regarded as a floor not a ceiling and the achievement of additional housing is acceptable if it can be delivered without breaching environmental and infrastructure constraints by:
 - Increasing density, consistent with criteria in PPS3
 - Encouraging opportunities on previously developed sites
 - Making best use of policies on exceptions sites to provide affordable housing in rural areas
 - the rate of dwelling provision for the period 2006 to 2021 i.e. 290 dwellings p.a. is to be used as the basis of provision in the early years of the next plan period beyond 2021.
 - the local development framework should identify sufficient specific deliverable sites to deliver housing in the first five-years from the date of adoption, identify a further supply of specific, developable sites for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15. Where it is not possible to identify specific sites for years 11-15, broad locations for future growth should be indicated. The site allocations will be made in the Allocations Document. It is for the Core Strategy to set out principles and broad objectives.
- 4.2** The proposed date of adoption for the Council's Allocations Document is July 2010. Therefore to meet the requirements of PPS3 we need to be considering housing supply for the period to 2025. On the basis of the annual average rate set out in the East of England Plan of 290 dwellings per year for the period 2006 to 2021 this would require a total provision of 5,510 dwellings for the period 2006 to 2025 (19 years).

4.3 In planning for new housing in the District the Council is not starting from scratch. There are a considerable number of new housing sites in the District which already have planning permission or which are allocated for housing development in the current local plan. These existing commitments are summarised below (as at 31.3.06):

- identified large sites (i.e. sites for 12 dwellings or more) as at 31.3.06 - 2525
- identified small sites (i.e. sites for 1 to 11 dwellings) as at 31.3.06 - 459
- additional sites identified in the March 2004 Urban Capacity study - 106

4.4 Taken together these sources of supply will provide 3,090 dwellings towards the overall requirement leaving a residual of 2,420 to be found. The existing commitments amount to about 10 years supply of housing land at the regional plan rate of 290 dwellings per year and will therefore meet housing supply requirements until about 2017. The Council has also commissioned a new urban capacity study which will identify the potential for further development within the existing towns of Braintree, Halstead and Witham and in the villages of Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon, Feering, Sible Hedingham and Silver End. Whilst it is difficult to give precise figures at this stage, on the basis of the above, the requirement for the period to 2017 to 2025 would be in the order of 2320 dwellings (i.e. 8 years at 290 dwellings per year). The Core Strategy will therefore need to consider how the supply of housing land in the longer term might be achieved. It is for the Core Strategy to set out the overall strategy for the District and the general direction of growth. It will be for the Allocations Document to identify specific sites for development. There will be a need for the Core Strategy and Allocations Documents to include phasing policies to ensure that there is a continuous supply of housing land throughout this period and to ensure that the provision of services, facilities, infrastructure and employment keep pace with the provision of housing.

4.5 The current settlement strategy for the District is set out in the Braintree District Local Plan Review. The main elements of the strategy are:

- New development restricted to existing sites and previously developed land within Braintree, Halstead and Witham and the larger villages
- The main focus for new development is at Braintree and Witham with new neighbourhoods at Marks Farm and Gt. Notley at Braintree and Maltings Lane at Witham
- Development at Halstead is restricted to maintain its character as an Essex country market town
- Development in villages is restricted to sites within village envelopes and exception sites for affordable housing.

4.6 The preparation of the local development framework provides an opportunity to review this strategy and to set out the direction of growth to 2021 and beyond.

- 4.7** There are two main issues to be considered. Firstly the general distribution of development across the District between the three main towns and the villages. Secondly the general direction of growth for each settlement where additional development is considered to be appropriate. It should be borne in mind that it is not the purpose of the Core Strategy to identify individual sites. It is to indicate the general location of new development. It will be for the Allocations Document to select sites for new development. Preparation of the Allocations Document is due to start later in 2007. All options will also be subject to strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal. This should help and inform the selection of the most sustainable option.
- 4.8** In considering options for the future development of the District the following factors are relevant:
- The majority of the District's population lives in the southern part of the District
 - The principal communication routes in the District are the A12, A120 and A131 corridors, including the main railway line and the Braintree branch line
 - The northern part of the District is generally of a higher environmental and landscape quality

Options

- 4.9** Whilst it would be possible to identify many different settlement strategy options and combinations of options the following are put forward as the main options for consultation.

Option 1 - Strategy based on existing commitments and sites within existing built-up areas

Option 2 - Urban Concentration - New development to be located at Braintree, Halstead and Witham

Option 3 - Dispersal – New Development spread more widely across the District including development in selected larger villages as well as the three main towns

Option 4 - New Settlement – New development to be located in a new settlement

Option 5 - Infrastructure Provision - New development located to assist with the delivery of infrastructure

These options are considered further below.

Option 1 - Strategy based on existing commitments and sites within existing built-up areas

4.10 This Option represents a continuation of the current strategy set out in the Braintree District Local Plan Review. It involves making maximum use of existing sites and previously developed land within existing settlements, often at high densities. As sites are mostly within existing urban areas they can benefit from existing services and facilities. The supply of sites from this source is not infinite and potential may not be sufficient to meet East of England Plan and PPS3 requirements. The new urban capacity study will provide up-to-date information on which a judgment can be made.

Option 2 – Urban Concentration - New development to be located at Braintree, Halstead and Witham

4.11 Braintree, Halstead and Witham are the three main towns in the District with the widest range of services and facilities and local employment. New development located at existing urban areas may therefore be more sustainable by reducing the need to travel. Braintree has been the fastest growing town in the District in the last ten to fifteen years and now has the widest range of services and facilities. Rail services to the town are, however, limited. Halstead is the smallest of the three towns with a more limited range of services and facilities and with no rail service. Set within the Colne Valley the town is constrained by its landscape setting. Witham is located in the A12 corridor and on the main Great Eastern railway line. Shopping, health and community facilities are limited and the town's internal road network suffers from congestion at peak periods.

4.12 Within this Option a number of combinations are possible. Development could be focused on one town only, split between 2 towns or distributed across all three. If this option is pursued a more detailed assessment would be required once the proposed split between settlements is known. Because of the constraints associated with Halstead it is considered that it would not be realistic as the sole focus of growth in the District and the following sub-Options are therefore put forward for consultation:

- Option 2A - New development to be concentrated at Braintree
- Option 2B - New development to be concentrated at Witham
- Option 2C - New development to be concentrated at Braintree and Witham
- Option 2D - New development to be concentrated at Braintree, Witham and Halstead

Option 3 – Dispersal – New Development spread more widely across the District including development in selected larger villages as well as the three main towns

4.13 This option would involve dispersing new development across the District between the towns and selected larger villages which have a range of services and facilities. This might include Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon and Feering and Sible Hedingham. New development in such villages may help to secure the retention of local services and facilities. Apart from those villages with a railway station on the main line the rural areas of the District are generally poorly served by public transport. This option therefore may generate additional car travel. Some villages are also subject to environmental and landscape constraints.

Option 4 – New Settlement – New development to be located in a new settlement

4.14 Rather than continue to identify additional sites in or adjacent to existing towns and villages a new settlement would provide the opportunity to focus all new growth in one location. There is no definitive guidance on the minimum size of a new settlement to secure an appropriate range of services and facilities. Research does indicate however that to support a secondary school a population of 15,000 is required. This would equate to a settlement of 5,000 to 6,000 dwellings. This scale of provision is currently beyond that required for the District by the East of England Plan. In their report the Panel that conducted the Examination of the East of England Plan commented "The potential role of new settlements was also discussed, mainly in the context of a significant number of suggestions for new settlements of around 5,000 dwellings" and "We were also not convinced that small new settlements of this general size would rank sufficiently high up the scale of sustainability to merit including them as a significant component of the spatial strategy" (para.4.17 of Panel Report). This option is nevertheless put forward for comment.

Option 5 - Infrastructure Provision

4.15 This option would give preference to locations where development could assist with the delivery of local infrastructure. This might include:

- Option 5A - Further development in Halstead to assist with the provision of a Halstead By Pass
- Option 5B - Development to the north of Witham to assist with the provision of a road link between the B1018 and the A12

- Option 5C - Development at Hatfield Peverel to assist with the provision of a road link between the B1019 and the A12
- Option 5D - Development at Tye Green, Cressing to assist with the provision of a passing loop on the Braintree branch line

Direction of Growth of Main Settlements

4.16 Whilst it is not the purpose of this document to set out a preferred strategy or to identify specific sites for development it is nevertheless appropriate to identify the options for the main directions of growth for the main settlements in the District. Comments received will help to inform the Preferred Options Document for the Core Strategy, which in turn will provide the basis for the preparation of an Allocations Document. For the purposes of this document the options identified are limited to the towns of Braintree, Halstead and Witham.

Braintree

4.17 Braintree is located at the crossroads of the A120 and the A131, which now form a bypass to the south and east of the town. The town is served by a single line branch railway, which provides a direct service to London. The town has grown rapidly over the last ten to fifteen years with new development extending the town up to the A120/A131 bypass and with the development of a new neighbourhood at Gt. Notley to the south-west of the town. Health services are limited and a commitment to the development of a new community hospital is awaited. It has employment areas at Springwood, East Braintree and Gt. Notley. The town centre has a good range of supermarkets and a reasonable range comparison good shops. The town centre is complemented by a factory outlet centre and leisure centre at Braintree Freeport. The town therefore possesses the main ingredients for further sustainable development. One of the main constraints to further growth is the A120/A131/B1018 Galleys Corner roundabout to the south-east of the town. Improvements to this junction are unlikely before 2014 and no further development that would exacerbate the problems at this junction can be considered until there is certainty of improvements being made. Landscape and environmental constraints are more significant to the north of the town. There is also a need to prevent the coalescence of the town with the villages that surround it.

4.18 It is considered that the main options for the future growth of Braintree are:

- Development to the south-west of the town (Option B1)
- Development to the west of the town (Option B2)
- Development to the north-east of the town (Option B3)

4.19 Option B1 - Development to the south-west of the town

Development to the south-west of the town would enable new development to take advantage of the services and facilities that have been provided at Gt. Notley. It could also take advantage of the improved road network in the area. There would be an opportunity to provide additional employment and community and leisure facilities.

4.20 Option B2 - Development to the west of the town

Development to the west of the town would have access to the improved section of the A120/A131 and would have less impact on Galleys Corner.

4.21 Option B3 - Development to the north-east of the town

There is an opportunity to the north-east of the town to use former gravel workings. It would be difficult to select this as a preferred direction of growth for the town until the A120 improvement between Braintree and Marks Tey is completed.

Halstead

- 4.22** Halstead is located at the crossroads of the A131 and the A1124. The town does not have a bypass and the A131 forms the main route through the town including the town's High Street. The town does not have a rail service and relies on bus services for public transport. The town centre has a limited range of supermarkets and comparison goods shops. The main employment areas are at Bluebridge, Kings Road and Butler Road. The town is set within the valley of the River Colne and is surrounded by landscape and environmental constraints. Development options for the town are limited without breaching its sensitive landscape character or undermining its character as an Essex country market town. For the purpose of this consultation only one option is suggested for Halstead and that is the use of existing sites and previously developed land within the existing urban area (Option H1).

Witham

- 4.23** Witham is located on the A12 and the main Gt. Eastern railway line with a high frequency of service to London and Colchester. The town centre has a limited range of supermarkets and comparison goods shops. Health services in the town are limited. The main employment areas in the town are at Freebournes and at Eastways with office development in the town centre. The town's internal road network suffers from congestion, particularly at peak hours. The town has seen significant new housing development in the last five years with the redevelopment of the Bridge Hospital site and the development of land between Maltings Lane and the A12. There are some environmental constraints particularly relating to the Blackwater and Brain Valleys. There is also a need to prevent coalescence of the town with the adjoining villages of

Rivenhall and Hatfield Peverel. Nevertheless Witham possesses the main ingredients for further sustainable development. It is considered that the potential directions for growth for Witham are:

- To the west of the town north of the railway line (Option W1)
- To the west of the town south of the railway line (Option W2)
- To the north-east of the town (Option W3)

Issues for Consultation

Issue 7

What is the most appropriate settlement strategy for the future development of the District to 2021 and beyond?

Option 16

Settlement Strategy Option 1

Strategy based on existing commitments and sites within existing built-up areas

Option 17

Settlement Strategy Option 2

Urban Concentration - New development to be located at Braintree, Halstead and Witham

Option 18

Settlement Strategy Option 2A

New development to be concentrated at Braintree

Option 19

Settlement Strategy Option 2B

New development to be concentrated at Witham

Option 20

Settlement Strategy Option 2C

New development to be concentrated at Braintree and Witham

Option 21

Settlement Strategy Option 2D

New development to be concentrated at Braintree, Witham and Halstead

Option 22

Settlement Strategy Option 3

Dispersal – New Development spread more widely across the District including development in selected larger villages as well as the three main towns

Option 23

Settlement Strategy Option 4

New Settlement – New development to be located in a new settlement

Option 24

Settlement Strategy Option 5

Infrastructure Provision - New development to be located to assist with the provision of new infrastructure

Option 25

Settlement Strategy Option 5A

Further development at Halstead to assist with the provision of a Halstead Bypass

Option 26

Settlement Strategy Option 5B

Development to the north of Witham to assist with the provision of a link road between the B1018 and A12

Option 27

Settlement Strategy Option 5C

Development at Hatfield Peverel to assist with the provision of a link road between the B1019 and the A12

Option 28

Settlement Strategy Option 5D

Development at Tye Green, Cressing to assist with the provision of a passing loop on the Braintree branch line

Question 1

Are there any other options?

Issue 8

If new development is required in Braintree, Halstead or Witham what is the most appropriate direction of growth?

Option 29

Braintree Settlement Strategy Option B1

Development to the south-west of the town

Option 30

Braintree Settlement Strategy Option B2

Development to the west of Braintree

Option 31

Braintree Settlement Strategy Option B3

Development to the north-east of Braintree

Option 32

Halstead Settlement Strategy Option H1

Use of sites within the existing built-up area

Option 33

Witham Settlement Strategy Option W1

Potential direction for growth to the west of the town north of the railway line

Option 34

Witham Settlement Strategy Option W2

Potential direction for growth to the west of the town south of the railway line

Option 35

Witham Settlement Strategy Option W3

Potential direction for growth to the north-east of the town

Question 2

Are there any other options?

Affordable Housing

4.24 There are two main elements to the Council's current affordable housing policy:

- A requirement for sites of 15 dwellings or more to provide at least 30% affordable housing
- An exception policy which allows sites to be developed for affordable housing adjacent to village envelopes for affordable housing where market housing would not be permitted.

4.25 The number of affordable houses being achieved through these policies is insufficient to meet the District's needs. At present around 100 affordable dwellings are being provided each year against an assessed need of some 600 dwellings per year. This has been achieved during a period of development on major sites such as Marks Farm in Braintree, Gt. Notley and Maltings Lane in Witham. It will be a significant challenge to sustain this level of new affordable housing development in the period beyond 2010. The policy has also resulted in a trend of an increased number of applications for sites of 14 dwellings.

4.26 The Council has commissioned a new housing needs study to provide evidence for a revised affordable housing policy in the Core Strategy. It is considered that the following either singly or in combination are options for the future development of the policy:

- An increase in the percentage requirement
- A change to the threshold of 15 dwellings
- Deletion of the threshold so that it applies to all housing sites either in the District as a whole or just in rural parishes under 3,000 population
- Different thresholds for different areas e.g. a lower threshold for rural parishes under 3,000 population
- A requirement for a commuted sum to be paid per dwelling for sites that fall below the threshold
- The allocation of specific urban greenfield sites to meet affordable housing need with a much higher proportion of affordable housing on those sites e.g. 80%
- Retention of the existing rural exception policy.
- The allocation of specific rural exception sites

Issues for Consultation

Question 3

How can more affordable housing in the District be secured?

Issue 9

Should the percentage of housing that is required be increased?

Option 36

Yes, the percentage of housing that is required should be increased

Option 37

No, the percentage of housing that is required should not be increased

Issue 10

Should the site threshold be lowered or deleted?

Option 38

Yes, the site threshold should be lowered

Option 39

No, the site threshold should not be lowered

Option 40

Yes, the site threshold should be deleted

Option 41

No, the site threshold should not be deleted

Issue 11

Should the site threshold be deleted in parishes under 3,000 population?

Option 42

Yes, the site threshold should be deleted in parishes under 3,000 population

Option 43

No, the site threshold should not be deleted in parishes under 3,000 population

Issue 12

Should a different threshold be applied to sites in rural areas?

Option 44

Yes, a different threshold should be applied to sites in rural areas

Option 45

No, a different threshold should not be applied to sites in rural areas

Issue 13

Should there be a commuted payment for affordable housing to be paid per dwelling for sites below the threshold?

Option 46

Yes, there should be a commuted payment for affordable housing to be paid per dwelling for sites below the threshold

Option 47

No, there should not be a commuted payment for affordable housing to be paid per dwelling for sites below the threshold

Issue 14

Should the existing rural exception policy be retained?

Option 48

Yes, the existing rural exception policy should be retained

Option 49

No, the existing rural exception policy should not be retained

Issue 15

Should specific rural exception sites be allocated?

Option 50

Yes, specific rural exception sites should be allocated

Option 51

No, specific rural exception sites should not be allocated

Issue 16

Should we allocate urban greenfield sites with a much higher percentage of affordable housing specifically to meet the need for affordable housing to be brought forward on a phased basis?

Option 52

Yes, urban greenfield sites with a much higher percentage of affordable housing specifically to meet the need for affordable housing should be allocated to be brought forward on a phased basis

Option 53

No, urban greenfield sites with a much higher percentage of affordable housing specifically to meet the need for affordable housing should not be allocated to be brought forward on a phased basis

Gypsies and Travellers

- 4.27** The Council is required to make appropriate provision for sites for gypsies and travellers in the District. It will be for the Core Strategy to set out a policy for the overall number of sites to be provided and the criteria for the location of sites. It will be for the Allocations Document to make site specific allocations.
- 4.28** The overall number of sites to be provided in the District will be set out at regional level in a review of the East of England Plan. Work on this is underway with an issues and options paper planned to be published in May 2007. This will set out options for the level of provision to be made in each District of the Region.
- 4.29** An Essex-wide study of the needs for gypsies and travellers has been undertaken by Salford University and this was published in February 2006. This estimates that in addition to accommodating the number of caravans already present in Essex on authorised and unauthorised sites, sites for an additional 59 caravans would be required across Essex up to 2016 to cater for the anticipated growth in the number of gypsy and traveller households. Further work is currently being carried out on the appropriate provision for each District, but Braintree District can be expected to take a share of this growth.
- 4.30** At present there are 2 authorised sites in the District managed by the County Council at Cressing and at Ridgewell. Both are permanent sites with 12 pitches (24 caravans) each. As at January 2006 the official count of caravans in the District showed that there were 43 caravans on authorised sites and 9 caravans on unauthorised sites. It is expected that the Council will be required to make new provision to accommodate, as a minimum, the number of caravans currently on unauthorised sites in the District plus a proportionate share of the projected growth in the County.
- 4.31** The current Braintree District Local Plan Review contains a criteria-based policy against which applications for private residential sites for gypsies and travellers can be considered. The criteria are:
- sites will not be permitted in a special landscape area, conservation area or other areas of historic interest, nature reserve or within or adjacent to a site of special scientific interest
 - the policy is confined to gypsies as defined in section 16 of the Caravans Act 1968 or travelling showpersons benefiting from exemption from site license requirements under the Caravan Sites Licensing Act 1960
 - the occupation of the site should be limited to a family or families that can demonstrate a local connection to the District (the consent should only inure for the benefit of the applicant and his or her dependents)
 - the site should be well screened from public view or have only minimal impact on the locality. Additional landscaping may be required

- sites must have, or be capable of having, convenient and safe access from the public highway, as well as provision for adequate water supply, drainage and other services together with parking and turning for occupants and visitors
- the site offers satisfactory access to local services, in particular education, shopping and public transport facilities
- no more than three pitches should be placed on the site and the site area should be commensurate with this level of occupation

4.32 It will be for the Core Strategy to demonstrate how the Council will positively address the requirements for sites for gypsies and travellers in the District.

Issues for Consultation

Question 4

How can the requirement to provide sites to meet the needs of gypsies and travellers in the District best be met?

Question 5

What criteria are the most important to guide the location of sites?

5 Economic Development

Background

- 5.1** The rapid rate of housing growth in the District in the last ten to fifteen years has not been matched by employment growth. This has led to an increase in out-commuting particularly by car. There is now an opportunity with the reduced rate of housing growth to promote economic development and to secure a better balance between housing and jobs. The scenarios developed by Cambridge Econometrics and described in section 2 above are ways in which this can be achieved.
- 5.2** There are many factors which influence the economic development of an area some of which are outside the scope of the local development framework. These will need to be pursued through other, complementary, strategies. They include:
- The need for a high quality transport network, free of congestion
 - The availability of a labour force with the appropriate skills and training
 - Learning and training facilities
 - The availability of suitable sites and premises
- 5.3** To assist with the development of policies and proposals for economic development the Council (in partnership with Chelmsford, Brentwood and Maldon Councils) commissioned the University of the West of England to undertake an economic study of the area. This can be viewed at www.braintree.gov.uk. The main conclusions of the study were:
- manufacturing in Braintree District is relatively strong compared to other mid-Essex Districts
 - between 1998 and 2003 the number of jobs in Braintree District increased by 17%, with the strongest growth in business and professional services and retailing
 - in Braintree District the share of employment accounted for by the largest firms (more than 200 employees) is very low at about 15% compared with 30% in Great Britain as a whole
 - mid-Essex has a tight labour market with high employment rates and low unemployment rates
 - there are higher rates of self-employment
 - there is a problem in retaining young workers
 - working from home accounts for about 10% of employment
 - the market for industrial space incorporating distribution, warehousing and factory units is relatively tight
 - under a business as usual scenario job numbers in the District could increase by 8,280 between 2001 and 2021

- under an enhanced growth scenario job numbers in the District could increase by 14,875 between 2001 and 2021
- more employment land will be required if land-use is not intensive and employment densities are low.

5.4 In terms of land use the main issue for the Core Strategy to consider is the amount and location of employment land. The main existing employment areas in the District are:

- Springwood and Broomhills in west Braintree
- East Braintree
- Skyline, Gt. Notley
- Bluebridge, Halstead
- Broton, Halstead
- Freebournes, Witham
- Eastways, Witham
- Earls Colne Business Park

5.5 In addition there is a site allocated at Maltings Lane/Hatfield Road, Witham which has yet to be started. There are also a number of employment areas in the villages including Sible Hedingham, Gt. Yeldham, Hatfield Peverel and Feering. As at 31.3.06 just over 57 hectares of land and premises were available for employment in the District.

5.6 The preparation of the Core Strategy presents an opportunity to review employment land needs. The options are:

- To protect existing employment land from development for other uses
- To extend existing employment areas
- To identify one or more locations for a new strategic employment area or business park in the District of 10 hectares or more which can act as the focus for a range of new employment types and increase the number of jobs in the District

Issues for Consultation

Issue 17

Should existing employment areas be protected from development for other uses?

Option 54

Yes, existing employment areas should be protected from development for other uses

Option 55

No, existing employment areas should not be protected from development for other uses

Issue 18

Should existing employment areas be extended? If so which ones?

Option 56

Yes, existing employment areas should be extended

Option 57

No, existing employment areas should not be extended

Issue 19

Should one or more locations be identified for a new strategic employment area or business park of 10 hectares and if so where should this be?

Option 58

Yes, one or more locations should be identified for a new strategic employment area or business park of 10 hectares

Option 59

No, one or more locations should not be identified for a new strategic employment area or business park of 10 hectares

Question 6

How can the number of jobs in the District be increased to secure a better balance between houses and jobs?

Issue 20

Can any currently used or vacant employment sites be allocated or redeveloped for other uses?

Option 60

Yes, currently used or vacant employment sites can be allocated or redeveloped for other uses

Option 61

No, currently used or vacant employment sites cannot be allocated or redeveloped for other uses

Question 7

How can the use of vacant or underused factories at Silver End and Gt. Yeldham be promoted?

Issue 21

Should the use of unused and underused farm buildings for employment be encouraged?

Option 62

Yes, the use of unused and underused farm buildings for employment should be encouraged

Option 63

No, the use of unused and underused farm buildings for employment should not be encouraged

Issue 22

Should additional land be allocated for employment in rural areas?

Option 64

Yes, additional land should be allocated for employment in rural areas

Option 65

No, additional land should not be allocated for employment in rural areas

6 Transport

Background

- 6.1** The A12, A120, A131, A1124 and B1018 form the main road network in the District. The main Gt. Eastern railway line crosses the south of the District with branch lines to Braintree and Sudbury. Stansted Airport is approximately 16 miles to the west of the District.
- 6.2** The main transport issues for the period to 2021 and beyond are the need to secure improvements to the strategic road network in the District and to rail and bus services. Alongside this is the need to promote sustainable travel options including the use of public transport, cycling and walking and community transport and to improve accessibility to public transport.
- 6.3** The major requirements are:
- A120 improvements between Braintree and Marks Tey
 - A12 improvements
 - Braintree branch line improvements to improve the frequency of the service
 - Main Gt. Eastern line improvements
 - Sudbury branch line improvements, particularly increasing capacity at peak periods
 - Promotion of better public transport
 - Creation of strategic cycle routes within towns
- 6.4** Other issues in the District include the need to relieve settlements of through traffic particularly Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon and Feering; the future role of the A131 in the north of the District and its implications for Halstead and Sudbury; and the need for additional car parking both in the town centres and at Witham, Kelvedon and Hatfield Peverel railway stations.
- 6.5** The A120 and A12 are the responsibility of the Highways Agency. They have advised that modelling work shows that in the period to 2021 congestion on the A12 and A120 in the District is likely to occur. They would therefore encourage the Council to pursue strategies and policies that seek to locate development where access to day-to-day facilities are available by public transport, cycling and walking, thereby reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car. They would also encourage the promotion of travel behavioural change initiatives to encourage more sustainable patterns of local travel. Such measures may include the development of travel plans or initiatives to review local parking and charging regimes.

- 6.6** A consultation on improvements to the A120 between Braintree and Marks Tey was carried out by the Highways Agency in 2005. An announcement on a preferred route is awaited. Once a preferred route has been selected there will be a need to ensure that the Government allocates sufficient funding for the improvement to be carried out at the earliest opportunity. For the A12 the Government announced in its response to the London to Ipswich Multi-Modal Study that it would ask the Highways Agency to bring forward schemes for its improvement between Boreham and Ardleigh before the middle of the next decade. Apart from a safety scheme between Hatfield Peverel and Witham no improvement proposals have yet been drawn up. For Kelvedon and Feering there is a long-standing issue of through traffic in the villages caused by lack of direct access to the A12 from Coggeshall and Tiptree. Any improvements that are made to the A12 or the A120 should address this issue.
- 6.7** The frequency of train services on the Braintree branch line is limited by single-track working. This means that many people choose to drive to stations on the main line to benefit from a greater frequency of service. It is a priority of the Council to secure improvements to the branch line to enable the frequency of service to be increased and to reduce the number of car journeys being made. Funding is currently identified in the Essex Local Transport Plan for a feasibility study to examine how this might be achieved. On the Sudbury branch line there is a capacity problem in peak periods with the two-car unit operating on the line having insufficient capacity for the number of passengers now using it.
- 6.8** BAA has announced its intention of applying for planning permission for a second runway at Stansted Airport in the summer of 2007. Whilst the Council strongly objects to this proposal it would nevertheless wish to see improvements to public transport between the airport and the District as the airport grows. This would include better bus and coach services between the airport and Witham and Halstead and a dedicated public transport link such as rail or guided bus between the airport and Braintree.
- 6.9** The Braintree Community Transport scheme already carries some 45,000 passengers per year for people without or unable to access conventional public transport. There is a need to build on this success and consider other innovative forms of transport, particularly for rural areas.

Issues for Consultation

Question 8

What measures are required to promote public transport, cycling and walking and to discourage the use of motor vehicles?

Question 9

What should the priority be for road improvements in the District?

Question 10

What improvements are required to bus and rail services in the District?

Issue 23

Is there a need for additional car parking in town centres and at the main railway stations?

Option 66

Yes, there is a need for additional car parking in town centres and at the main railway stations

Option 67

No, there is not a need for additional car parking in town centres and at the main railway stations

Question 11

What improvements are required to public transport between the District and Stansted Airport?

Question 12

What innovative ideas are there for improving public transport in rural areas?

7 Town Centres and Retailing

Background

- 7.1** The District's town centres provide the social and economic focus of their communities and is important that the local development framework contains policies and proposals to maintain and enhance their vitality and viability. Local centres within urban neighbourhoods and village shops are of similar importance to their communities. The last ten to fifteen years have seen many changes in retailing, including the growth of regional shopping centres, the growth of out-of-town retail parks, extended opening hours, Sunday trading and the growth of internet shopping.
- 7.2** The main town centres in the District are Braintree, Halstead and Witham. These rely mainly on convenience shopping and local services to attract people to use them. They do not offer the same amount or range of comparison retailing as the nearby sub-regional centres of Chelmsford and Colchester. Braintree Freeport and the Braintree Retail Park together consist the main out-of-centre retail location in the District.
- 7.3** Government policy as set out in PPS6 is:
- to promote the vitality and viability of town centres by:
 - Planning for growth and development of existing centres
 - Promoting and enhancing existing centres by focusing development in such centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment accessible to all
 - to enhance consumer choice by making provision for a range of shopping, leisure, tourism and local services, which allow genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community and particularly socially excluded groups
 - to support efficient, competitive and innovative retail, leisure and other sectors with improving productivity
 - to improve accessibility, ensuring that new development is, or will be, accessible and well-served by a choice of means of transport
 - to focus development in and plan for the expansion of existing centres as appropriate
 - to promote town centre management, to create partnerships to develop, maintain and improve town centres and manage the evening and night-time economy

- 7.4** In order to assist with the development of policies and proposals for the local development framework the Council commissioned GVA Grimley to prepare a retail study for the District. This was published in 2006 and can be viewed on the Council's website. The study includes a health check for each of the town centres, an assessment of the future capacity for convenience and comparison floorspace and recommendations on policies.

The key recommendations of the study are:

7.5 Braintree Town Centre

- Braintree should be defined as a Major Town Centre over the forthcoming LDF period;
- A study should be undertaken of sites that may be suitable for the expansion of comparison shopping in and adjacent to the existing town centre;
- While it should be identified for retail growth, Braintree town centre should not try and compete with the comparison retail offer in the sub-regional centres. It should aim to protect its strong convenience goods function and consolidate and enhance its role as a strong comparison goods shopping destination;
- The Council should define Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages to protect the A1 shopping function and protect the health of the town centre from a strong and growing service sector;
- The Council should monitor, and resist if necessary, out of centre proposals that may result in an unacceptable impact and possibly even closure of town centre foodstores. At present, the strong foodstore offer provides a different type of shopping than that provided at the Freeport Outlet Village;
- There is no capacity for further convenience goods floorspace over the LDF period in Braintree;
- There is capacity for circa 8,136 sq m net of comparison goods floorspace in Braintree over the LDF period;
- The Council should encourage proposals to enhance, consolidate and expand comparison goods retail floorspace in the town centre;
- The Council should implement schemes to improve linkages and integration throughout the centre, ensuring all areas benefit from maximum footfall. In particular, the Council should investigate measures to improve linkages from High Street through to the George Yard shopping centre, perhaps through demolition;
- Market Place should benefit from ongoing investment in the public realm and its role as an outdoor seating, café/restaurant area;
- There is potential to enhance New Street/Market Street as a key central shopping area, which links the Tesco foodstore to the southern end of the Primary Shopping Area on Bank Street;
- The Council should continue to invest in the overall environment to maintain the attractiveness of the town centre.

7.6 Halstead Town Centre

- Halstead should be defined as a Town Centre over the forthcoming LDF period;
- The centre should continue to perform a local shopping function, underpinned by a strong convenience and service sector, maintaining the representation of national multiple comparison goods retailers;
- The Council should define Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages to protect the A1 shop function and control any growth in the service sector that may undermine the health of the centre;
- The quantitative analysis highlights capacity for only 581 sq m net of convenience goods floorspace over the forthcoming LDF period;
- The Council should monitor, and object if necessary, to proposals for major new foodstore development over the LDF period that may harm the health of Halstead town centre;
- The quantitative analysis highlights capacity for only 527 sq m net of comparison goods floorspace by 2021;
- Land East of High Street should continue to be allocated for mixed use comprehensive redevelopment, although any proposal for a retail element should be underpinned by strong linkages through to the existing retail frontages;
- Weavers Court, including the Co-op foodstore, could be identified for redevelopment over the forthcoming LDF period. At the very least, the Council should encourage and support the improved performance of the Co-op foodstore;
- 'The Centre' should be allocated for refurbishment or redevelopment over the forthcoming LDF period, although a mix of uses may be more appropriate given its location off the main High Street;
- The Council should resist new foodstore proposals on the Halstead Football Club site due to its out of centre location, poor linkages with the core shopping area, a deficiency in capacity for new floorspace, and the vulnerable performance of the existing town centre Co-op foodstore;
- Colchester Road/Parsonage Road is a sequentially preferable site and would anchor the northern part of the town centre, but land to the East of High Street would be more appropriate for foodstore development.

7.7 Witham

- Witham should be defined as a Town Centre over the forthcoming LDF period;
- Witham should not aim to compete with higher order centres such as Braintree and Chelmsford, but should enhance and consolidate its convenience, comparison and service business sector in accordance with its role as a more local 'everyday' shopping destination;
- The Council should aim to retain key comparison goods attractors in the town centre;
- The quantitative analysis highlights no capacity for additional convenience goods floorspace up to 2021;

- Witham may be able to support new foodstore development in or adjacent to the town centre over the LDF period, although impact and trade draw would need to be carefully considered.
- The Council should aim to improve the performance of comparison goods floorspace through a range of measures including accessibility and environmental improvements, as well as maintaining a mix of uses throughout the centre;
- The quantitative analysis highlights capacity for an additional 780 sq m net of comparison goods floorspace over the LDF period;
- The Newlands Shopping Precinct should be allocated for comprehensive redevelopment to enhance the comparison goods shopping role of the Primary Shopping Frontages;
- The Council should allocate Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages to protect the range of A1 retail uses while allowing greater flexibility for other town centre uses elsewhere. The Grove Centre and the Newland Shopping Precinct should be allocated as Primary Shopping Frontages.

7.8 These recommendations will be given further consideration by the Council in the light of public consultation before deciding the preferred policies and proposals for the town centres.

7.9 Outside the town centres the main issues relate to future development at Braintree Freeport, retail warehousing, the future role and size of district centres and the retention of local shops and services in villages.

7.10 The retail study also considered leisure uses. There has recently been a growth in commercial leisure uses such as health clubs and gyms, go-karting tracks, and children's play centres. These have primarily located in employment areas and there is an issue as to whether this is the most appropriate location and whether specific areas need to be allocated for such uses.

Issues for Consultation

Issue 24

What should the strategy be for Braintree Town Centre?

Option 68

To contain Braintree town centre within its existing boundaries

Option 69

To identify a site adjacent to Braintree town centre for additional retail floorspace, particularly for comparison shopping

Option 70

To identify Braintree Freeport and Braintree Retail Park for further expansion

Option 71

To identify other out-of-centre sites around Braintree for additional comparison goods floorspace

Issue 25

What should the strategy be for Halstead Town Centre?

Option 72

To contain Halstead town centre within its existing boundaries

Option 73

To identify land to the east of Halstead High Street for additional convenience shopping

Option 74

To identify another site adjacent to Halstead town centre for additional convenience shopping

Option 75

To identify an out-of-centre site around Halstead for additional convenience shopping

Issue 26

What should the strategy be for Witham Town Centre?

Option 76

To contain Witham town centre within its existing boundaries

Option 77

To identify the Newland Precinct for comprehensive redevelopment

Option 78

To identify a site adjacent to Witham town centre for additional convenience shopping

Question 13

Are there any other options?

8 Carbon Emissions and Renewable Energy

Background

- 8.1** As referred to in section 1, the Council carried out a series of consultation events in 2006 as part of the initial consultation on the Core Strategy and review of the Community Strategy. One of the top ten priorities arising from this consultation was to increase energy efficiency in the built environment.
- 8.2** This is particularly pertinent, bearing in mind that Braintree District Council is a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration, which acknowledges the increasing impact that climate change will have on our community during the 21st century. This is reinforced by the objectives and targets of the Braintree District Council Sustainable Energy Strategy.
- 8.3** The declaration commits the Council to tackling the causes and effects of a changing climate on the District, which through its land-use planning function can include reducing carbon emissions by encouraging more energy efficient design and construction as well as meeting energy needs from renewable resources.
- 8.4** One of the key measured steps in the Essex Climate Change Strategy is to 'Encourage all Local Planning Authorities to promote further the sustainable planning and design of new development, with particular regard to both climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.'
- 8.5** The Essex Climate Change Strategy states in the Action Plan that policies and plans should ensure that both mitigation and adaptation to climate change are addressed by all relevant policies and plans produced by authorities, agencies and non-governmental organisations in an integrated way.
- 8.6** Another identified action from the Essex Climate Change Strategy is to design for sustainability. Encouraging businesses and other organisations (in particular local authorities, the construction industry and utility providers) to design infrastructure, buildings, etc. that will be resilient to climate change impacts (including flooding, heat stress, high winds and subsidence), whilst at the same time considering efficiencies in water consumption, energy consumption, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and responsible usage of natural resources.
- 8.7** On 13th December 2006 the Department for Communities and Local Government published "Towards a Zero Carbon Future". This included a challenging package of measures for planners and house builders to help to reduce carbon emissions and bring innovation to the building industry with the aim being to tackle climate change by putting it at the heart of the planning system and the way we build new homes.

- 8.8** Currently, the energy used to heat, light and run our homes alone accounts for 27% of all of the UK's carbon emissions – around 40 million tonnes. To help tackle this the Government is proposing that all new homes be zero carbon by 2016. Energy efficient and insulated buildings, which draw their energy from zero or low carbon technologies and therefore produce no net carbon emissions from all energy use over the course of a year will help reduce carbon emissions as well as lowering fuel bills for households.
- 8.9** The overall strategy, as set out in the consultation document “Building a Greener Future: Towards Zero Carbon Development” provides a real opportunity to deliver more sustainable homes. It was issued as part of a package of wide ranging measures which includes a framework for progressively tightening Building Regulations up to 2016 to increase the energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of new homes; and the publication of the Code for Sustainable Homes to increase the environmental performance of new houses and give homeowners better information about the sustainability of their home.
- 8.10** The Code for Sustainable Homes is closely linked to Building Regulations, but with standards set above the requirements of them. It is the Government's intention that the Code will signal the future direction of Building Regulations in relation to carbon emissions from energy use in homes.
- 8.11** The Code will complement the system of Energy Performance Certificates, which will be introduced in June 2007 under the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). The EPBD will require that all new homes have an Energy Performance Certificate providing key information about the energy efficiency/carbon performance of the home.
- 8.12** The Draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) on Planning And Climate Change (a supplement to PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development) expects planning strategies to be tested on their carbon ambition and in providing for new homes, jobs and infrastructure needed by communities, to shape places with lower carbon emissions that are resilient to climate change. The PPS expects new development to be located to optimise its carbon performance and make the most of existing and planned opportunities for de-centralised, renewable and low carbon energy supplies.
- 8.13** The Government recognises that planning is one of the elements that can make a positive contribution in reducing the likelihood of climate change and for mitigating against its impacts. This can be achieved in providing for new homes, jobs and infrastructure in a way that shapes places with lower carbon emissions and that are more resilient to climate change impacts.
- 8.14** The PPS encourages regional planning bodies, as part of their approach to managing performance on carbon emissions, to produce regional trajectories for the expected carbon performance of new residential and commercial development. The East of England Plan includes policies that sets a framework for the Braintree District Local Development Framework.

- 8.15** At the local level, Development Plan documents are required to set out policies on the provision of low carbon and renewable sources of energy to provide the platform necessary for securing and complementing the increasingly high levels of energy efficiency required by the Building Regulations. Whilst currently draft in form, the Planning and Climate Change Supplement states that in the interim period before plans are adopted it is proposed that planning authorities should require a standard of 10% of the building's needs to be met by low carbon and renewable sources of energy. This follows on from the Climate Change Programme produced by the Government and the report of the 2006 Energy Review with the Government setting a target to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20% below 1990 levels by 2010. The Climate Change Programme will take the UK closer to this domestic target and make progress towards the Government's long term ambition to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by the year 2050.
- 8.16** All planning authorities should prepare and deliver spatial strategies that make a full contribution to delivering the Government's Climate Change Programme and energy policies and in doing so contribute to global sustainability; in enabling the provision of new homes, jobs, services and infrastructure and shaping the places where people live and work to secure the highest viable standards of resource and energy efficiency and reduction in carbon emissions. These principles also reflect the UK Government's Sustainable Development Strategy that contains priority areas for immediate action in the UK including sustainable consumption and production, climate change and energy and natural resource protection and environmental enhancement.
- 8.17** Planning and Climate Change states that planning authorities should assess their areas potential for accommodating renewable and low carbon technologies including for micro-renewables to be secured in new residential, commercial or industrial development. In particular planning authorities working closely with industry and drawing in other appropriate expertise should:
- In developing the Core Strategy and their approach to site allocation pay particular attention to opportunities for utilising and expanding existing decentralised energy supply systems and fostering the development of new opportunities for decentralised energy from renewable and low carbon energy sources to supply proposed and existing development;
 - Consider allocating sites for renewable and low carbon energy sources and supporting infrastructure taking care to avoid stifling innovation; look favourably on proposals for renewable energy including on sites not identified in Development Plan documents
 - Not require applicants to demonstrate either the overall need for renewable energy and distribution or for a particular proposal for renewable energy to be sited in a particular location;

- Avoid policies that set stringent requirement for minimising impact on landscape and townscape if these effectively preclude the supply of certain types of renewable energy and therefore other than in the most exceptional circumstances such as within nationally recognised designations, avoid such restrictive policies;
- Ensure that a significant proportion of the energy supply of substantial new development is gained on site and renewably and/or from a decentralised renewable or low carbon energy supply.

8.18 In setting out in a Development Plan document their policy for a significant proportion of the energy supply of substantial new development to be gained on site and renewably and/or from a decentralised renewable or low carbon energy supply, planning authorities should:

- Have regard to the overall costs of bringing sites to the market and the desirability of avoiding any adverse effect on the development needs of communities;
- Ensure the proposed approach is consistent with securing the expected supply and pace of housing development shown in the housing trajectory required by PPS3;
- Make realistic assumptions on the availability of renewable and low carbon technologies and applicable thresholds for their viable delivery;
- Consider the contribution to be made to meeting the energy performance requirements for new buildings set through Building Regulations;
- Bear in mind that off-site, but localised generation and supply of energy may be more effective in reducing carbon emissions and build flexibly into their policies for where this is demonstrably the case because local networks are or will be available for connection;
- Consider the potential for on-site renewable energy supplies to meet wider needs; and
- In proposing increases in the proportion of energy supply to be gained on site and renewably and/or from a decentralised renewable or low carbon energy supply set out a clear and realistic time table for when the new standard will be applied so as to allow proposed new development to adjust to that standard successfully.

8.19 This is all reinforced by Planning Policy Statement 22: Renewable Energy, and its companion guide which seek to ensure that the development of renewable energy alongside improvements in energy efficiency and the development of combined heat and power will make a vital contribution to the Government's aim of cutting CO² emissions. Bearing in mind the Government's Energy White Paper target of generating

10% of UK electricity from renewable energy sources by 2010 and 20% by 2020 it is imperative the Braintree District Council actively promotes energy efficiency and renewable energy generation as part of its planning function.

- 8.20** The Core Strategy can include policies to secure energy efficiency, sustainable construction and use of renewable energy in new developments. However these will not apply to existing buildings which make up the majority of the stock. One option to address this would be to require the energy efficiency of existing buildings to be improved when planning permission is granted for their extension.
- 8.21** PPS22 states that local planning authorities and developers should consider the opportunity for incorporating renewable energy projects in all new development.

Issues for Consultation

Issue 27

The draft Supplement to PPS1 'Planning and Climate Change' states that local planning authorities should require a standard of 10% of a building's needs to be met by low carbon and renewable sources of energy, should the Council increase this proportion to 15%?

Option 79

Yes, the Council should increase the proportion of a building's needs to be met by low carbon and renewable sources of energy to 15%

Option 80

No, the Council should not increase the proportion of a building's needs to be met by low carbon and renewable sources of energy to 15%

Issue 28

How can the planning process address energy efficiency in the existing housing stock? Should planning permissions for extensions require the energy efficiency of the building to be extended to be improved?

Option 81

Yes, planning permissions for extensions should require the energy efficiency of the building to be extended to be improved

Option 82

No, planning permissions for extensions should not require the energy efficiency of the building to be extended to be improved

Issue 29

The Government is working towards a target that all new homes should be zero carbon producing by 2016. Should the Council seek such developments ahead of this date?

Option 83

Yes, the Council should seek developments towards new home zero carbon targets ahead of 2016

Option 84

No, the Council should not seek developments towards new home zero carbon targets ahead of 2016

Issue 30

For certain sites it may be difficult to develop zero carbon homes, due to geographical factors or environmental sensitivities, should the Council be identifying sites for localised renewable energy and Combined Heat and Power communal systems so as to reduce reliance on the national grid?

Option 85

Yes, the Council should be identifying sites for localised renewable energy and Combined Heat and Power communal systems so as to reduce reliance on the national grid

Option 86

No, the Council should not be identifying sites for localised renewable energy and Combined Heat and Power communal systems so as to reduce reliance on the national grid

Question 14

What else could the Council do as local planning authority to reduce carbon emissions and increase renewable energy generation?

Issue 31

Do you think that solar panels and other renewable technologies should be allowed on listed buildings and in conservation areas (subject to structural capabilities)?

Option 87

Yes, solar panels and other renewable technologies should be allowed on listed buildings and in conservation areas (subject to structural capabilities)

Option 88

No, solar panels and other renewable technologies should not be allowed on listed buildings and in conservation areas

Issue 32

Should the Council identify potential sites for the development of large scale wind turbines in the form of an opportunities map for the district, based on planning and technical suitability?

Option 89

Yes, the Council should identify potential sites for the development of large scale wind turbines in the form of an opportunities map for the district, based on planning and technical suitability

Option 90

No, the Council should not identify potential sites for the development of large scale wind turbines

Issue 33

Should the Council set sustainable materials standards for new development?

Option 91

Yes, the Council should set sustainable materials standards for new development

Option 92

No, the Council should not set sustainable materials standards for new development

Issue 34

Should the development plan include other measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation and if so what should they be?

Option 93

Yes, the development plan should include other measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation

Option 94

No, the development plan should not include other measures for climate change mitigation and adaptation

9 Social, Health and Community Issues

Background

9.1 Social, health and community issues were amongst the top ten priorities that emerged from the consultation events that were carried out in 2006. These included the need to:

- improve leisure and recreation opportunities
- improve policing and community safety
- improve sports facilities
- provide services locally to reduce the need to travel

9.2 Health services are also an important issue locally. It will be for the Community Strategy to take forward policies and proposals to improve the delivery of these services and for the local development framework to address the spatial implications, for example if new sites or buildings are required for these services.

9.3 For higher order health services the District is served by hospitals outside the area at Broomfield, Colchester and Addenbrookes at Cambridge. The provision of more services locally would make it easier to access these services and reduce the need to travel. The priorities for the District are:

- the development of a Community Hospital at Braintree
- delivery of out-patient services locally to Witham
- expansion of the Halstead Hospital.

9.4 Community safety and the need to reduce anti-social behaviour is also a priority for the District. The Council and its partners in the Responsible Authority Group have developed a Community Safety Strategy for the period 2005 -2008. This can be viewed at

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk/Braintree/community/community+safety/default.htm>

Amongst the priorities identified for action is tackling anti-social behaviour. The Essex Police Strategy Plan for 2006-2009 also identifies the following priorities:

- to tackle anti-social behaviour and disorder
- to increase police visibility and reassurance
- to improve the timeliness and the quality of response to calls for assistance

9.5 These strategies cover a shorter timescale than the period to be covered by the local development framework and the review of these strategies will provide an opportunity to consider further priorities in relation to the review of the Community Strategy and the local development framework.

- 9.6** Both the Mid-Essex Economic Futures study and the Cambridge Econometrics study have highlighted skills issues in the District. A significant proportion of residents (28%) in the District have no qualifications. Furthermore looking at higher level qualifications Braintree District has a lower level of residents with NVQ level 4/5 qualifications than other comparable Districts. It will be important therefore to secure the improvement of skills training in the District. Braintree College has aspirations to expand, including the possibility of relocating to a new site. There are also aspirations to provide improved post-16 skills training in Braintree.
- 9.7** For leisure the District enjoys a mixture of private and public facilities throughout the area. Recently the Council has provided a new swimming pool and other sports facilities at Halstead and a new swimming pool at Braintree is under construction. There is now a need to consider the future of the Bramston Sports Centre in Witham which is in need of improvement and modernisation.
- 9.8** Both Braintree Town Football Club and Halstead Town Football Club are seeking to improve their grounds. These clubs are recognised as being important to the local community and the Council will assist the clubs to meet their aspirations through the review of the Community Strategy and the local development framework if possible.

Issues for Consultation

Issue 35

Is there a need to provide more out-patient services and other higher level health services locally and if so how should this be done?

Option 95

Yes, there is a need to provide more out-patient services and other higher level health services locally

Option 96

No, there is not a need to provide more out-patient services and other higher level health services locally

Question 15

What further measures can be carried out to improve community safety?

Question 16

What measures can be taken to improve education and skills training in the District?

Question 17

What are the priorities for improving sports and leisure facilities in the District?

10 Implementation

Background

- 10.1** The local development framework will need to include policies and proposals to secure its effective implementation. There will be a need to ensure that the delivery of housing is phased to ensure a continuous supply throughout the plan period and to ensure that the provision of employment, infrastructure, services and facilities keep pace with housing growth.
- 10.2** There will also be a need to ensure that new development makes an appropriate contribution to meeting the costs of infrastructure and services that are required to serve the development. The current practice to achieve this is to negotiate agreements under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) for individual developments, which provide for the provision of affordable housing, highway improvements, open space provision, contributions to services and facilities and so on. This process can be time consuming, can lack clarity about the type and quantum of contributions that will be required from individual developments and does not deal with the cumulative impact of smaller developments which do not have section 106 agreements.
- 10.3** The Government Planning Circular 05/2005 recognises that where the combined impact of a number of developments creates the need for infrastructure, it may be reasonable for the associated developers' contributions to be pooled. This approach involves a standard charge being set per unit of development which is used as the basis for calculating the pooled contribution. This principle is already put into practice for certain services and facilities, for example there are formulae for calculating the contributions that developments should make to open space maintenance and the provision of education, but as yet there is not a framework for levying a standard charge for a comprehensive range of services and infrastructure. Circular 05/2005 requires the infrastructure for which contributions will be sought to be specified in advance in policy documents, to be based on the physical and community infrastructure required and to be set at a fair and reasonable scale considering the level of development undertaken.
- 10.4** One option therefore for the Core Strategy is to include a policy requiring the payment of a standard charge for planning contributions for infrastructure, services and facilities that are required to support that development or to mitigate the impact of that development on community interests. The infrastructure and services to which the charges will be applied will also need to be set out in the Core Strategy. The charges themselves and relevant formulae would be set out in a supplementary planning document. A partnership arrangement with relevant service and infrastructure providers would be required to plan, deliver and monitor the services and infrastructure for which the contributions have been made.

- 10.5** The Government has published proposals for a planning gain supplement, which if implemented would serve a similar purpose to standard charges. The planning gain supplement would however need new legislation before it could be implemented and the option for standard charges is therefore put forward for consultation until further details of the Government's proposals are known.

Issues for Consultation

Issue 36

Phasing of Development

Should the development of housing be phased to enable a continuous supply throughout the plan period and to ensure that the provision of employment, services, facilities and infrastructure keeps pace with housing growth?

Option 97

Yes, the development of housing should be phased

Option 98

No, the development of housing should not be phased

Issue 37

Planning Obligations and Standard Charges

Should the Core Strategy include a policy requiring the payment of a standard charge towards the provision of community services and infrastructure required by the development and identified as part of the policy?

Option 99

Yes, the Core Strategy should include a policy requiring the payment of a standard charge towards the provision of community services and infrastructure

Option 100

No, the Core Strategy should not include a policy requiring the payment of a standard charge towards the provision of community services and infrastructure

11 Development Control Policies

11.1 Development Control policies for the District are currently set out in the Braintree District Local Plan Review which was adopted in July 2005. Under the new planning system these policies are automatically saved until July 2008 and this period can be extended by the Secretary of State if policies need to be continued until they are replaced by new policies in the local development framework. To this end it is proposed to produce a separate Development Control Policies Document. We are proposing to start work on this in 2007 and publish a Preferred Options Document in September 2008. A preliminary assessment of all the Review Local Plan policies has been made and a schedule of whether they are to be replaced, deleted or merged and the timetable for doing so is set out in the Local Development Scheme First Review which can be viewed at:

<http://www.braintree.gov.uk/Braintree/planning/Planning+Policy/LocalDevelopmentScheme.htm>

12 What Happens Next and Future Programme

- 12.1** This document puts forward a range of issues and options for the future development of the District for consultation. The Council will consider responses received before deciding on the preferred approach to be taken. It is proposed to publish a Preferred Options Document for the Core Strategy in September 2007. This will also be the subject of public consultation before the Council finalises its plans. The final document, known as a Submission Document will then be submitted to the Secretary of State. The planned submission date for the Core Strategy is April 2008. After submission the document will be examined in public by an independent inspector appointed by the Secretary of State who will assess whether the document passes the Government's tests of soundness and can therefore be adopted. It is also proposed to commence work on an Allocations Document in September 2007. This will identify the site specific allocations that are required to deliver the Core Strategy. We are also planning to start more detailed work on the Development Control Policies document in September 2007. Neither the Allocations Document or the Development Control Policies Document can be submitted to the Government for examination until the Core Strategy is adopted.
- 12.2** Comments are invited on this document, particularly in relation to the issues and options which are highlighted in the text. Details on how to comment are set out in the Introduction.
- 12.3** If there are any other issues or options not included in the document that you wish to draw to our attention then please do so here.

Question 18

Do you wish to draw the Council's attention to any other issues or options that you think are relevant to the Core Strategy?

If you would like this document in an alternative format, such as large print, braille, audio cassette or another language, please call us on 01376 551414 and ask for Planning Policy or email planningpolicy@braintree.gov.uk. Alternatively, a fully accessible version of the document can be found on our website www.braintree.gov.uk