Emerging Braintree Local Plan Part 2: Matters, Issues and Questions Consultation

Main Matter 2: The Spatial Strategy

June 2021



Emerging Colchester Local Plan Part 2: Matters, Issues and Questions Consultation

Main Matter 2: The Spatial Strategy

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These representations have been prepared by Barton Willmore LLP on behalf of L&Q, Cirrus Land and G120 Land Ltd (the 'Promoters'). The Promoters have been respondents through both the Draft Local Plan Sections 1 and 2 process through their promotion of the sites known as West Tey (Section 1) and referred to in this document as 'Temple Border' (Section 2) (Site Appraisals ref: CRE13). As such, they are key stakeholders in the overall Braintree spatial strategy.
- 1.2 Representations were previously made to the Regulation 19 Braintree Local Plan Part 2 (BLP 2) consultation and therefore as a key stakeholder and respondent through the Local Plan examination process, we believe that their attendance in the Examination of BLP 2 is essential.
- 1.3 Furthermore, the Promoters remain fully committed to the proposed development site at Temple Border and a Vision Document for up to approximately 2,500 dwellings with associated infrastructure is appended to this statement (**Appendix 1**). The Site is located to the eastern side of Braintree and is bordered along its northern and western boundaries by the A120, which links the A12 junction at Marks Tey to the east with Bishops Stortford via Stansted Airport to the west, connecting with the M11. The scheme is fully viable and deliverable in parallel with the A120 preferred option D and would facilitate the critical infrastructure required for the new road.
- 1.4 This statement is made in respect of Matter 2: The Spatial Strategy and directly in response to questions raised by the Inspectors in the Matters, Issues and Questions consultation closing 27 of June 2021.

2.0 QUESTION 1: IN LIGHT OF REMOVAL OF THE 2 GARDEN COMMUNITIES FROM SECTION 1 OF THE BLP IS BRAINTREE'S SPATIAL STRATEGY SUPPORTED BY ROBUST AND UP TO DATE EVIDENCE AND OTHERWISE SOUNDLY BASED?

Evidence Base

- 2.1 We support the broad settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy for the emerging BLP 2, but we note that the evidence base underpinning the strategy is dated, potentially bringing into question a number of assumptions made in the Plan.
- 2.2 The majority of the evidence base documents submitted within the evidence base for the BLP 2 were drafted in approximately 2014-2017, making these documents now 4-7 years old. A similar age is observed with regard to the supporting documents published which largely concern the local development scheme, habitats regulations assessment, and issues and scoping documents.
- 2.3 The process of drafting and adopting a new Local Plan is expected to take approximately 3-4 years (the 2017 Local Development Scheme laid out such a timetable spanning Autumn 2014 Autumn 2018) and therefore documents published before this could be considered to be becoming outdated. A substantial degree of relevant change has been observed over the last 4-7 years. The National Planning Policy Framework has been revised since and there has been an increased focus on sustainability and environmental outcomes, the Road Investment Strategy 2 (RIS2): 2020 to 2025 document has been published (which is likely to have a strong impact across the district and further potential commitments may be incorporated in RIS3) there have been significant revisions to the approach to housing delivery and methods for calculating housing need, and the effects of COVID have strongly impacted the economy, housing priorities, sustainable transport solutions, and access to private and public amenity and open spaces.
- 2.4 There is therefore a clear need to re-assess what the priorities of local communities have been and should become since 2014-2017 moving forward, with the outcome being to determine an up-to-date approach for directing development towards the most sustainable locations for growth and as such, how development should be directed and realised.
- 2.5 We believe that the priority must be to provide stability through swift Local Plan adoption but securing an immediate review of the Plan to allow up to date evidence to be factored

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into the future spatial planning of the district. This would align with a potential immediate review of the Colchester Borough Council Local Plan, acknowledging the important cross boundary opportunities between these two authorities.

Managing Housing Supply

- 2.6 We continue to support the premise of large-scale developments, such as a sustainable extension of Braintree, being the way to demonstrate a robust and continuous supply of housing and critical new infrastructure in the long-term to deal with present day critical matters such as net zero carbon, biodiversity net gain, modern employment habitats, reducing the reliance on the motor vehicle and addressing climate change. Continuous piecemeal or small to medium scale development around the urban area will not and cannot adequately address these key matters which need to be dealt with by developing at a large scale.
- 2.7 Critically in relation to the spatial strategy and housing provision, the removal of Garden Communities from BLP 1 creates a substantial change to the number of new dwellings projected and anticipated during the plan period. Omitting these previously proposed new communities removes a total of 3650 dwellings from the 2017 BLP 2 Housing trajectory, and based on the full existing commitments and potential dwelling supply at 31 March 2020, figures suggest an approximate figure of 2810 dwellings having been removed from the period of 2020-2033.
- 2.8 In addressing this, we support the premise of the sustainable settlement tiers and that these areas can accommodate some growth. However, the sub-optimal evidence base warrants an immediate review given the opportunity that alternative larger scale development may bring in developing better connections to existing services and new infrastructure such as schools and roads.
- 2.9 As a result of these BLP 2 changes, there should be an assessment of the availability of sites capable of delivering housing particularly at upper tier settlements such as Braintree as part of an immediate review.

Deficit in Highways Funding and the Critical Requirement of the A120

2.10 The removal of garden communities from BLP 1 has had an inevitable impact on potential funding for highways improvements needed across the district particularly noting the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme and improvements to the A120. The anticipated A120 improvements are a critical piece of infrastructure that may be added into RIS 2 in

Question 1

the immediate future with the project currently being progressed by Highways England. Therefore, without an immediate plan review, this project and other development opportunities may be unnecessarily delayed in coming forward.

- 2.11 Highways England (HE) has noted that the A12 currently "struggles to cope with existing peak traffic levels, resulting in delays and reduced speeds. With few available diversions, accidents lead to traffic disruption over a wide area. The projected growth in population and local development in the area will only increase the pressures on this road".
- 2.12 Essex County Council (ECC) has similarly stated with regard to the A120 that they believe "the A120 is not fit for purpose and is long overdue an upgrade. We are not alone either, as more than four out of five people who responded to our 2017 consultation agreed. ... In June 2018, we announced our favoured route for the new road as Route D. We predict that every £1 million spent on the new route will deliver £4.5 million in benefits. Our study work has now been completed and passed to Highways England"².
- 2.13 It is noteworthy that this work associated with improvements to the A120 has been progressed significantly since 2017 i.e. post the drafting of the majority of the evidence base for BLP 1 and 2. Discussions are also currently progressing with the local authority and HE with respect to Temple Border in the context of works to the A120 with the prospect that the A120 works referenced may soon be included in RIS 2.
- 2.14 The removal of garden communities that could have been a source of funding for these critical highways infrastructure improvements (see Statement of Common Ground SCG/017A December 2019), is likely to lead to delays in infrastructure delivery with knock on impacts for the delivery of new sustainable homes.
- 2.15 The NPPF 2012 states in paragraph 29 and that "Transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives". Paragraph 52 goes on to state that "The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns that follow the principles of Garden Cities. Working with the support of their communities, local planning authorities should consider whether such opportunities provide the best way of achieving sustainable development"."

¹ A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme' section of the Highways England website

² a120essex.co.uk

- 2.16 The Temple Border site provides the majority of the land required to accommodate the Galleys Corner interchange improvements which will facilitate the start of the diverted route assuming Essex County Counil's (ECC) preferred Route D (or similar) is progressed. If these works are delivered in conjunction with redevelopment of the site then as well as alleviating the current congestion improved public transport and walking and cycling links can be delivered to benefit not just the development but the wider area. This site could provide a natural extension to the east of Braintree and tie in with existing infrastructure, which would be preferable to other large sites in the district which could not offer such a benefit to this part of the town. By working in partnership with HE and ECC the infrastructure can be designed to facilitate increased capacity at Galleys Corner whilst facilitating the downgrading of the existing north-south section of the A120 along the western boundary of Temple Border and the provision of an at-grade pedestrian and cycle link to the west of this section of road. Without this level of joined up thinking it would be more piecemeal and the A120 works may make sustainable links to the site more complicated or convoluted.
- 2.17 The A120 realignment is key to unlocking any further development in Braintree. Despite many people continuing to work from home and limited traffic associated with Stansted airport, a high level of congestion and delay at Galleys Corner and Marks Farm roundabouts are a cause for concern moving forward. Any other large developments, particularly to the east of Braintree, will exacerbate this problem and it is essential that the A120 realignment is delivered as soon as possible to facilitate development and drive economic growth in north Essex. This site can help in delivering the key interchange on the realigned route and bring much needed improvements to the free flow of traffic through this part of the network.
- 2.18 The A120 improvements are therefore required to enable necessary future sustainable development in Braintree District, to also improve the quality of life of its users and residents along its route, and to facilitate connectivity from key nodes of trade. It is therefore critical that the BLP 2 be immediately reviewed to ensure the future spatial planning for the district takes place in parallel with the delivery of the new A120 to ensure a joined-up approach.

3.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 This Statement has been produced on behalf of L&Q, Cirrus Land and G120 Land Ltd in response to the questions posed by the Inspectors in Main Matter 2: The Spatial Strategy. We have the following key points to make:
 - We have concerns over the age of the evidence base supporting the BLP 2 and consider that an updated suite of evidence should be sought.
 - The removal of Garden Communities from BLP 1 results in a marginal position and removes flexibility and choice with regard to housing supply during the plan period.
 - The removal of Garden Communities from BLP 1 results in the loss of an opportunity to secure a holistic approach to key infrastructure such as to the highways network
 - The anticipated A120 improvements are identified as a critical piece of infrastructure that may be added into RIS 2 in the immediate future and without an immediate plan review, this and other development opportunities may be unnecessarily delayed in coming forward.
- 3.2 As a solution to the above concerns it is proposed that a policy be inserted into the BLP 2 requiring an immediate review of the Plan. Suggested text for such a policy is included below:

Policy # - Reviewing the Local Plan

The Council will undertake a review of the Braintree Local Plan Part 2, which will commence no later than one year after the adoption of the plan. An updated or replacement plan will be submitted for examination no later than three years after the date of adoption of the plan. In the event that this submission date is not adhered to, the policies in the Braintree Local Plan Part 2 which are most important for determining planning applications for new dwellings will be deemed to be 'out of date' in accordance with paragraph 11 d) of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

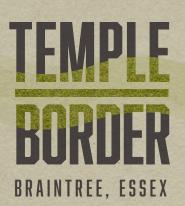
The plan review will secure levels of growth that accord with government policy. The planning and delivery of strategic growth will be aligned with the delivery of planned infrastructure schemes.

The review will also serve to build stronger working relationships with adjoining and nearby authorities.

3.3 **Appendix 1** contains the Promoters vision for Temple for a scheme of up to approximately 2,500 new homes and associated infrastructure which could be allocated through an immediate BLP 2 review process.

APPENDIX 1

Temple Border – Vision Document



L&Q is a place maker – the golden thread that runs through all our developments

L&Q is a regulated charitable housing association and one of the UK's most successful and dynamic independent social businesses. L&Q house over 250,000 people in more than 105,000 homes and work in partnership with local stakeholders to create high quality places and thriving communities.



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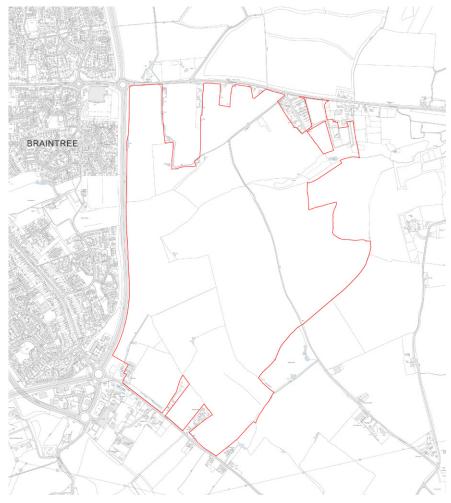
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1. INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared on behalf of London & Quadrant ('L&Q') and sets out a Vision and future aspirations for Temple Border, an exciting residential led development opportunity on the east of Braintree, Essex.

The purpose of this document is to inform initial discussions with Braintree District Council regarding the future opportunity at the Site. The Vision Document sets out the vision, the strategic opportunity in this location, supporting themes, and an emerging Concept Plan.

Moving forward, the intention of L&Q is to promote the Site through the Local Plan process, demonstrating the opportunity afforded by the Site to provide a sustainable extension to Braintree to meet the needs of existing and future communities.



Site Boundary Plan

2. THE VISION

The vision for Temple Border has been shaped by the placemaking opportunities of the Site and the aspiration to bring forward the emergence of a sustainable, net zero-carbon, contemporary new community.

Employment opportunities, including local working places

Up to 2,500 new homes

A 'Sports and Wellness Centre', including a new Braintree stadium and community sports provision Access to an enhanced natural environment

Education, retail, and leisure facilities

'Smart' infrastructure

Quality connections into Braintree prioritising pedestrians and cyclists

An abundance of open spaces for recreation, community food production and play areas



3. THEMES

Future development at Temple Border would address strategic objectives of Braintree District Council. The following themes set a framework against which future decisions can be made to deliver our vision, which have been influenced by the clear policy directions of the national government for new residential-led development that focus on climate, health, and creating beautiful places.









HEALTHY / ACTIVE



CONNECTED



SMART / ADAPTABLE



COMMUNITY-DRIVEN



CHERISHED





Commit to achieving a net zerocarbon community, with a focus on building design and performance, energy supply, sustainable movement, and waste.

Bring the community together through an environment that encourages healthy lifestyles and ensures long-term net gains to biodiversity.



LOCAL PROSPERITY

Support the vitality and regeneration of Braintree and the wider region economy.



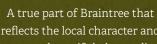
Prioritise active travel and sustainable travel options with quality connections into Braintree.

Ensure local people are

at the heart of

the process.

work and play.

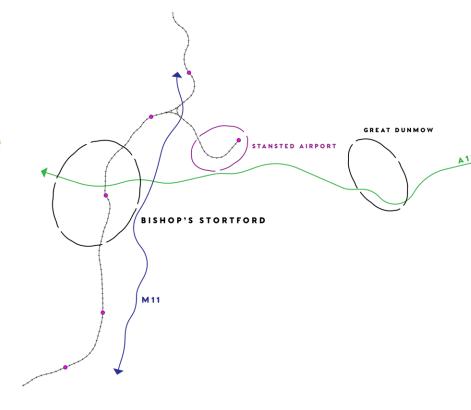




4. STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY

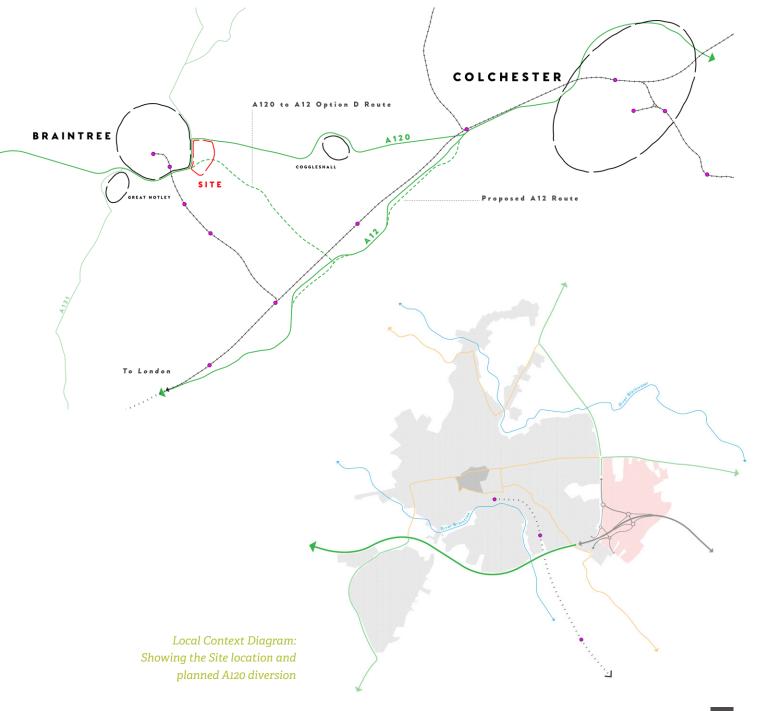
Temple Border is located in a logical and sustainable location for future growth, with land forming part of the planned A120 upgrade, and direct connections to significant local and regional destinations.

The Site is located to the eastern side of Braintree and is bordered along its northern and western boundaries by the A120, which links the A12 junction at Marks Tey to the east with the M11 and A10 via Stansted Airport to the west. The A120 is subject to a planned diversion in this area as part of options being considered to divert and upgrade the existing A120 between Braintree and the A12. In June 2018, Essex County Council ('ECC') announced Option D as the preferred option for new A120 improvements around Braintree. This would provide a new road link from Galleys Corner to the A12 south of Kelvedon. This route was recommended for inclusion in the Road Investment Strategy ('RIS'). Following ECC's consultation on route options, Highways England (HE) are now responsible for taking this forward.



Having liaised with ECC and HE, we understand plans for the A120 alignment are progressing well. Although identified in RIS2 as a pipeline project for RIS3 (2026-2030), we understand that the project is the top reserve scheme for RIS2 if any other schemes do not progress, and the final Option could be confirmed in the next 18 months. If this were to occur, the A120 realignment proposals could potentially be brought forward sooner.

Previously, the Site was not progressed through the Call for Sites process due to severance concerns caused by the current A120 alignment. There is now an opportunity to resolve this with the new alignment of the A120 providing a new defensible boundary, and a downgraded north south alignment that would facilitate permeability into Braintree.



5. SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Temple Border would be a net zero-carbon development providing biodiversity net gains and significant health and well-being opportunities to support the sustainable growth of Braintree and the wider region economy.

The Site is located in close proximity to a wide range of existing facilities and services that would be supported by a residential led development at Temple Border. Within a 2km area of the Site. there are several schools, retail and employment areas, a superstore, numerous sports clubs and recreational spaces, and a community centre. Numerous connections will provide convenient and sustainable access to these local destinations, including a distinctive pedestrian and cycle access point that will cross the existing A120 route and form part of a recognised green link through Braintree into the Site and the countryside beyond.

The vision would complement what is currently on offer within Braintree. Moreover, the scale of the Site provides the opportunity to deliver facilities and services to meet the needs of the existing and future communities within the area.

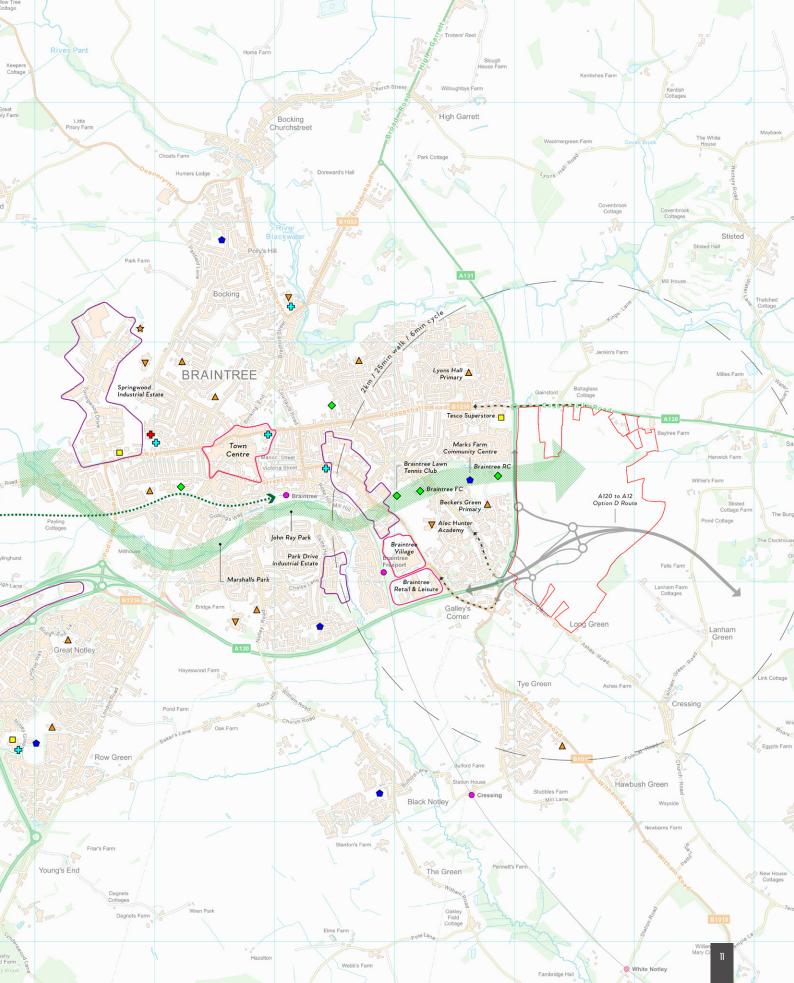
Through the provision of high-quality facilities, leisure opportunities and parkland, complemented by appropriate services, the proposals will seek to encourage and boost local tourism also.

Temple Border will support the journey to net zero-carbon. Objectives have been set for four key contributors of our emissions: building & infrastructure design and performance; connectivity; energy supply; and waste. This will ensure that the development has the enabling framework to achieve net zero-carbon as soon as feasible. The aspiration is for Temple Border to provide an exemplary extension to Braintree, which champions net zero-carbon development.

A principal pillar of the emerging proposals is an overarching aim of the development to ensure that long-term net gains to biodiversity are delivered both in terms of habitat enhancement and creation as well as for protected species. The goal of achieving significant net gains will have beneficial ripple effects on numerous other aspects of the development, including residential well-being and achieving a net zerocarbon development, and on the wider community, by providing long-term and functional habitats for local people and wildlife, and contributing to local biodiversity action plans and nature recovery schemes.



Opposite: Local Context Plan



6. UNDERSTANDING THE PLACE

Temple Border comprises approximately 153ha of mainly agricultural land, forming large fields with planted boundaries. It is located less than 2km from the Town Centre and Braintree Station, with few constraints and significant opportunities.

Desktop analysis and on-site surveys of the Site's strategic, physical, and environmental characteristics have helped to shape the emerging proposals, which are reflected in the Concept Plan demonstrating its deliverability. The results of the surveys are summarised within this section.

The main opportunities include:

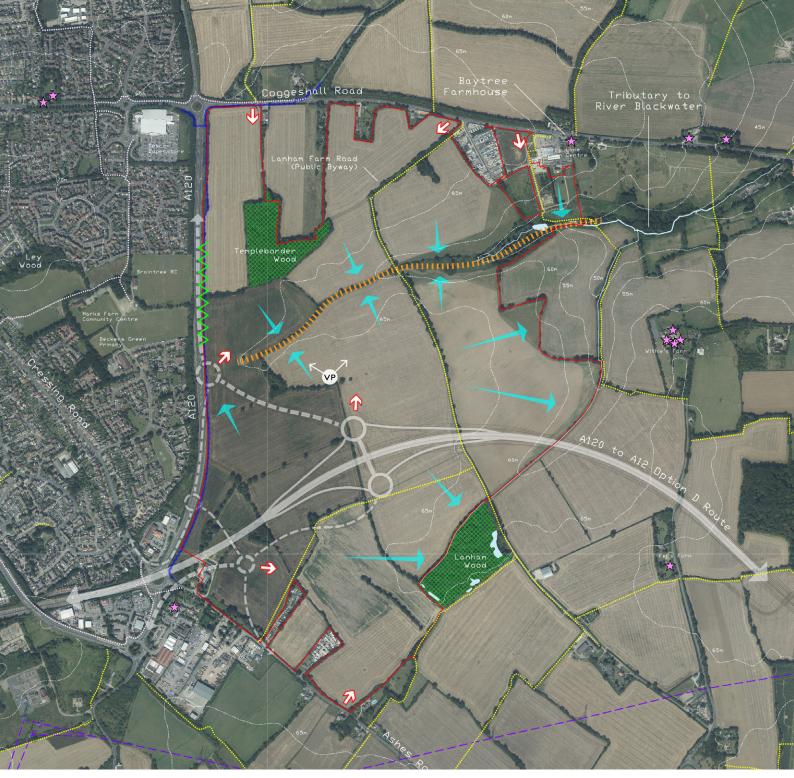
- Several Public Rights of Way (PROW) cross through the Site, including Lanham Farm Road (public byway).
- Templeborder Wood is recognised as an Ancient Woodland and local wildlife site.
- The Site does not contain any designated or non-designated built heritage assets.

- The A120 is subject to a planned diversion. There is opportunity to downgrade the existing route and provide ped/cycle access from the Braintree Rugby Club land into the Site via a bridge or at-grade crossing to form a distinctive sustainable movement and green infrastructure corridor. There is opportunity also to inform the character and alignment of secondary infrastructure through development of the proposals.
- There is a relatively flat landform in the western and southern Site area (between approximately 65m and 68m AOD), and a gently sloping valley landform in northern and eastern Site area (42m AOD at lowest point).
- The Site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and not considered to be at risk of flooding.

- Initial ecological surveys have identified habitats with reptile potential, trees with bat roosting potential, and several badger setts, which are generally associated with the planted field boundaries and stream corridor.
- Several Historic buildings/features are near to the Site, in particular the Grade II* Listed Baytree Farmhouse. However, these are not considered to prevent wider development of the Site.
- Large parts of Braintree District are covered by a minerals safeguarding area. Whilst we do not anticipate any commercially extractable minerals on Site, a targeted investigation will be required to demonstrate this is the case and an appropriate assessment provided.



View Point (VP) marked on plan shown opposite



Site Opportunities Plan







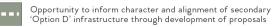












Medium Pressure Gas Main

(6m easement corridor)

7. CONCEPT

The Concept Plan demonstrates an emerging spatial framework for the delivery of a sustainable, net zero-carbon, contemporary extension to Braintree that will meet the specific needs of the location and its population.

Distinctive natural features underpin the structure of the emerging proposals, and the basis for the creation of new parks and spaces that will provide civic amenity and links into the surrounding setting. The most significant of which, is the creation of Templeborder Wood Park: an active, distinctive, extensive, beautiful, and biodiverse green corridor that connects Braintree into the Site, its destinations, and the countryside beyond.

At the heart of Templeborder Wood Park is the Neighbourhood Centre, to comprise local employment, working spaces, retail and leisure facilities, a school, new homes, a 'mobility hub', and pedestrian and cycle links in the enhanced setting of the stream corridor and Lanham Farm public byway. Significant movement routes converge on this destination to establish a recognisable place for active, shared, and public transport interchange, to play a key role in meeting sustainability objectives, supporting active travel, reducing car dependency, connecting to Braintree, and encouraging social interaction.

The concept shows how the planned diversion (Option D) of the existing A120 could be incorporated into the

proposals, including modifications to secondary infrastructure that would facilitate a more integrated, distinctive and permeable development. The modifications involve diverting and enlivening the future A131 through the development, and downgrading the existing A120 into a calm and welcoming local route animated by paths, cycleways, landscaping, lighting, seating areas, and public art. High level, initial discussions have been held with ECC and HE to corroborate the indicative modifications and suitability of access.

Near to existing sports facilities is the potential location for a Sports & Wellness Centre, to comprise a new Braintree stadium, rehabilitation facilities, community sports provision, and walking and bike trails, in the enhanced setting of Templeborder Wood. Its features have been informed by discussions with key stakeholders, including Braintree Football Club and Braintree Rugby Club. It would provide an outstanding destination for Braintree and play a key role in bringing the community together and encouraging healthy lifestyles.

Other features of the emerging proposals that would bring benefit and value to the local area include:

- Up to 2,500 new homes including affordable homes for local people that work towards a net zero-carbon future.
- Movement infrastructure that prioritises pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport.
- Land adjacent to the Cherry Lane Garden Centre for complementary uses, potentially comprising makers spaces, a café, an urban farm, an information centre, and play facilities.
- Smart infrastructure, such as EV charging stations, air/water quality sensors, and smart transport systems to help maintain and improve the livability of the community.
- Land for community agriculture where residents and pupils can grow, consume, and even sell locally produced food.
- Access to nature and the surrounding landscape
- Recognisable local character.

The Concept Plan is deliberately conceptual in its application and does not seek to pre-determine a final outcome but serves to set the tone and general direction of future discussions.



Concept Plan



Main access



Secondary access



Downgraded Road (low speed) with cycle superhighway



Indicative location for crossing of downgraded road



New/Enhanced A131 Route



Site Area / Open Space / Green Infrastructure



Indicative Area for Residential Development



Indicative Area for Sports & Wellness Centre



Indicative area for urban farm, café, makers spaces, etc.



Indicative Local Centre



Indicative School



Gateway Space with potential for mixed-uses



Public Right of Way



Diverted PROW (Indicative Route)

Key Ped/Cycle Links



Potential Area for Additional Biodiversity Net Gain





The image presented is for illustrative purposes only. It does not seek to determine a final outcome, but serves to demonstrate how the idea could be delivered.

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