

# Local Plan Review 2041

## Issues & Options





# Foreword

We are starting the refresh of our Local Plan to make sure we can tackle the challenges that face our economy, society and environment – to deliver a plan that meets community's needs for housing, employment and infrastructure.

The Government requires us to review our targets for new homes and jobs every five years. As we adopted the Local Plan in 2021, we have to start a review now, so there is enough time to consult and make sure residents and businesses are fully involved in the process before five years is up. This is to ensure that we remain in control and identify the right type of development in the right places with the necessary infrastructure. The plan period is proposed to be extended to 2041 to ensure we are planning for our communities' needs into the future and to address major challenges we face.

The Braintree district is the second largest district, by area, in Essex, with a population that has grown 7% in the past decade. Our business sectors are thriving, and interest in building new homes is increasing.

At a national level, the Government is giving high priority to increasing housing delivery and like every area, we are expected to take our share of new development. We have a new mandatory housing target of providing 1,115 homes up to 2041.

Everyone deserves a decent home they can call their own, but many residents are locked out of that opportunity being affected by higher house prices. To meet this need, we need to plan for more good quality affordable homes and create accessible places that promote walking, cycling and public transport, as well as providing jobs for local residents.

It's crucial we take this time to make meaningful changes to tackle the climate crisis and reduce our impact on the planet. The council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and is working to be carbon neutral as far as possible by 2030. The Local Plan will focus on integrating measures to enable this to happen, such as sustainable design policies, embedding on-site renewable energy measures into new developments, high quality green infrastructure and protecting and expanding natural habitats and biodiversity.

We want to seize this opportunity to ensure that we create places that people are proud to live in. Key to delivering this is embedding the principles of high-quality design, having safe and well-designed streets with good quality open spaces and good access to facilities and services. We will work to support and improve residents' health and wellbeing by creating a network of great places and spaces which enable residents to live healthy and active lifestyles.

This document is the start of the conversation towards reviewing the Local Plan. A new Local Plan cannot be written without your ideas – so please do get involved and help us plan the district's future together.

**Councillor Gabrielle Spray**  
**Cabinet Member for Planning**



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# Introduction

## What is an Issues and Options document?

This document is one of the first steps for reviewing the Braintree District Local Plan.

In this document we have started to identify the key challenges for the future development of the Braintree district and ask for your views on how we can best address these through planning policies.

This has been informed by:

- Feedback from residents from other consultations and engagement activities
- Emerging market trends
- Requirements from changing national, regional and local planning policy
- Council strategies and objectives

The main areas we are consulting on are:

- The vision and objectives
- The key issues and options for each main topic in the Local Plan
- Existing policies
- The Spatial strategy and principles

Our engagement on this document is the start of the discussion which will result in an updated Local Plan. Your input is an invaluable part of the preparation process, and will inform the development of a vision, objectives and policies to help create a sustainable framework for growth and development across Braintree district for all.

### Where are we now and what happens next?



# How to Respond

## How to be part of the conversation

The consultation will run from Monday 20th January 2025 until midnight on Friday 7th March 2025.

The quickest and easiest way to comment is through our consultation platform at:

- [www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanengagement](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanengagement)

This also allows you to download the consultation documents and sign up for email updates for future consultation events and updates on the Local Plan Review.

You can also submit comments by:

- Returning a response form to: [planningpolicy@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@braintree.gov.uk)
- Returning/posting a response form to Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree. CM7 9HB
- Paper response forms are available on request, from Causeway House offices in Braintree or or the following local libraries during opening hours: Braintree, Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Halstead, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon, Sible Hedingham, Silver End and Witham.

There will also be opportunities to meet with planning staff face-to-face at a public drop-in exhibition during the consultation period. Please visit our website for details at [www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanengagement](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanengagement)

Manned drop-in sessions will be held at the following locations and times:

- Kelvedon Institute (small hall) - Monday 27th January 4-7:30pm
- Coggeshall Village Hall - Tuesday 28th January 4-7:30pm
- Halstead Queens Hall - Wednesday 29th January 4-7:30pm
- Hatfield Peverel Village Hall - Thursday 30th January 4-7:30pm
- Braintree Town Hall - Tuesday 4th February 4-7:30pm
- Witham Public Hall - Thursday 6th February 3:30-7pm
- Braintree Town Hall - Saturday 8th February 9am - 12



**Please note that we are unable to accept anonymous representations, and any comments received after the closing date cannot be accepted.**



# All about Local Plans

## What is a Local Plan?

**1.1.1** The Local Plan is a key planning document that is used to shape, plan and manage growth, regeneration and development across the district over a minimum 15-year period.

**1.1.2** We use it to assess planning applications and guide our decisions on:

- The location, amount and type of development in the district;
- The standards that development should meet;
- What it should look like;
- What services and infrastructure are needed and where;
- How all residents will benefit from the growth and development.

**1.1.3** However, there are limitations on what can be controlled through the Local Plan. For example, some forms of development do not require planning permission, such as some changes to the use of a building or some alterations to a house. The planning system cannot specify who or which business occupies a development. Planning also operates alongside other types of regulation, such as licencing and environmental health legislation.

## Why do we need one? Why refresh it?

**1.2.1** The government requires all councils to review their Local Plan every five years. This will ensure it remains up-to-date and continues to meet the changing needs of our current and future residents, addressing emerging challenges and help us make the most of new opportunities.

**1.2.2** The current Local Plan covers the period 2013-2033. As we adopted the Local Plan in 2021, we must review it by 2026 and that needs to start now to ensure we involve the community as much as possible. The review is proposed to take the plan period up to 2041, which will mean that further growth will need to be identified through Local Plan allocations as more people are moving into the area, people are living longer and to meet central government housing targets. If we fail to update our Local Plan, the District is at risk of being subject to development outside of preferred locations and therefore it is important that we work to review our plan as quickly as possible.

**1.2.3** This review will look at the existing objectives and policies to determine how effective they continue to be, and to update them where necessary. Other new policies could also be included in the Plan if required.



## **What is its relationship to other plans?**

### **Links with other documents (Minerals and Waste, neighbourhood plans, corporate documents)**

**1.3.1** Other documents of relevance to the Local Plan Review include the Essex County Council Minerals Plan, the Essex County Council Waste Plan, adopted and emerging neighbourhood plans, and the Braintree District Council Corporate Plan. The Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) sets out the project plan for the review of the Local Plan as well as the production of other Local Plan documents and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's).

## What are the stages of creating a new Local Plan?

Milestone	Indicative date
Call for Sites	May – October 2024
Evidence Base	Ongoing as identified
Early engagement	July/August 2024
Issues and Options Consultation	January-March 2025
Consultation on the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) (known as 'Preferred Options')	October/November 2025
Amendments to the Local Plan to create the Submission Local Plan	Winter 2025/2026
Consultation on the Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) (known as 'Pre-Submission')	Spring 2026
Preparing the Local Plan Submission to the Planning Inspectorate/Examination	June 2026
Examination of the Local Plan	Estimated 6 month process from submission date
Adoption of the Local Plan	Estimated December 2026 - February 2027

**Table 1 Local Plan production - Main Stages**

### Call for Sites

**1.4.1** The first stage of the production of the Local Plan was to undertake a “Call for Sites”. This is where the Council writes to all landowners, developers, agents, and the public in our database to find out if they have any sites they would like to be considered for inclusion in the Local Plan. This exercise took place in May 2024 and concluded in October 2024. Around 350 sites have been submitted for consideration which would be capable of providing housing and employment, as well as other uses. It should be noted that no sites were submitted for Gypsy and Traveller sites, however the Council would still need to provide for any identified need.

**1.4.2** The Council will also be updating its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) to include the sites submitted, however this does not mean that those sites will be selected for allocation. They will all go through a robust assessment process to determine whether they are suitable, available and achievable for development.

**1.4.3** More information on the Call for Sites can be found here: [www.braintree.gov.uk/callforsites](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/callforsites)

**1.4.4** Further information relating to the SHLAA can be found here: [www.braintree.gov.uk](http://www.braintree.gov.uk)

## Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment

**1.4.5** The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a legal requirement which assesses the economic, social and environmental effects of the Local Plan and monitors its impacts.

**1.4.6** This helps the Council to assess the merits of a range of different Local Plan options as well as alternative proposals and helps to determine an appropriate strategy which would deliver the best outcomes for the Braintree district. The SA helps to identify any measures that would be required to help reduce any harmful impacts of the Plan. The SA is an ongoing document which is required to be produced and updated at most stages of the Local Plan process, including once the Local Plan is proposed for adoption.

**1.4.7** The "Scoping" is the first stage of a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and identifies the main sustainability issues which the district has, and which need to be taken into account. Scoping sets out the assessment framework which is used in the SA and has a range of objectives that the Local Plan's strategy, sites and policies could seek to achieve.

**1.4.8** The Council also must consider the impacts of the Local Plan on UK/European designated sites for nature conservation including Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, and RAMSAR sites even though they lie outside of the the district. This process is called the Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA).

## National Planning Policy Framework and Guidance

**1.4.9** The Local Plan must consider the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

**1.4.10** The NPPF sets out that Local Plans must include strategic policies to address key strategic issues, as well as policies which help inform decision making on planning applications. It requires Local Plans to set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and to make provision for it.

**1.4.11** This includes housing, infrastructure, community facilities, conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

**1.4.12** The Issues and Options document has been prepared in the context of the 2024 NPPF, however it is likely that the NPPF will be changed again as the Local Plan review progresses and if this happens, the plan would need to be updated.

**1.4.13** Currently the Local Plan review will be assessed against the tests of soundness included at paragraph 36 of the NPPF.

- a) **Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which as a minimum, seeks to meet the area's objectively assessed needs, and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development:

- b) **Justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
- c) **Effective** – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
- d) **Consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in this Framework and other statements of national planning policy, where relevant.

## PAS Tool Kit

**1.4.14** Paragraph 34 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) outlines the necessity for local planning authorities to review their local plan policies to ensure they remain effective and up to date. This effectively means the Council should consider if updating their local plan policies within five years of adoption, or sooner if needed.

**1.4.15** To assist Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in their Local Plan reviews, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has developed a Local Plan Route Mapper & Toolkit comprising of the Local Plan Route Mapper which is guidance and a series of 4 toolkits consisting of assessment tables.

These are:

- Toolkit Part 1: Local plan review assessment
- Toolkit Part 2: Local plan form & content checklist
- Toolkit Part 3: Local plan process requirements checklist
- Toolkit Part 4: Local plan soundness & quality assessment

**1.4.16** These assessment tables help guide Braintree District Council through all stages of the plan-making process in the production of the Local Plan, including deciding if it is necessary and whether a partial or full review is suitable. The tools will ensure the Local Plan review is conducted robustly and objectively, with an efficient and effective approach. This allows the Council more time to focus on drafting a high-quality plan.

**1.4.17** The PAS toolkit Part 1 and Part 2 identified a number of issues which indicated that the Local Plan would require updating, including the need to update parts of the plan so they are in accordance with newer versions of the NPPF,

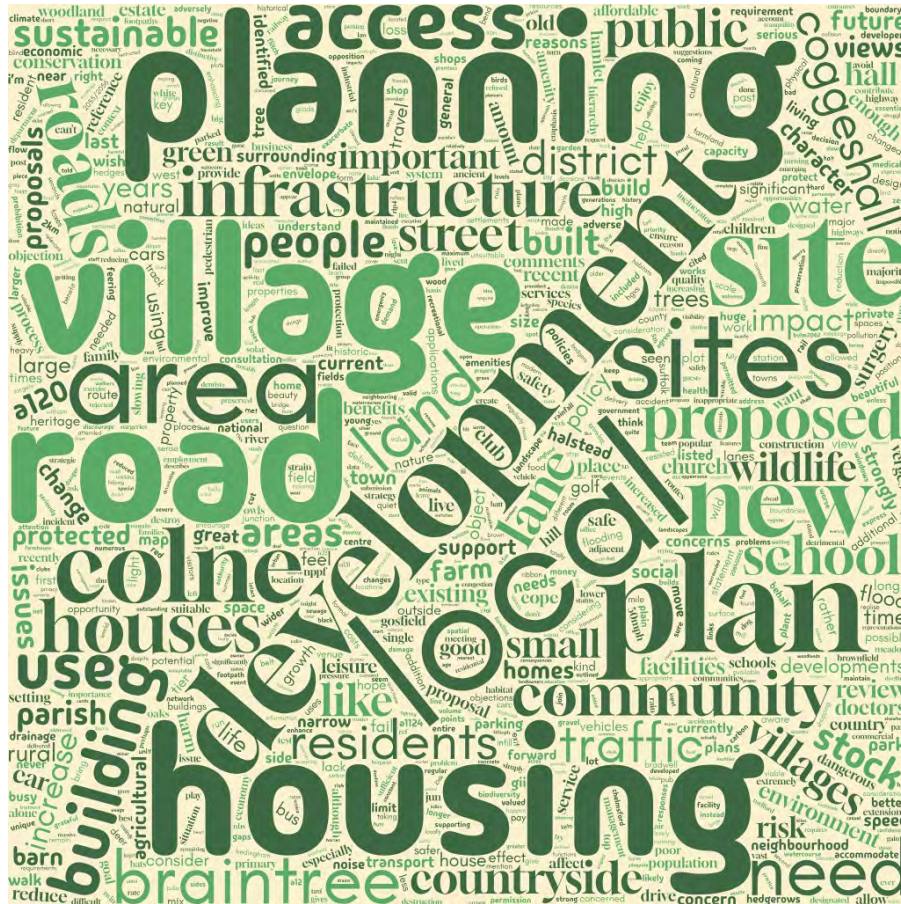
**1.4.18** The completed PAS Toolkit [part 1](#) and [part 2](#) are available online.

## Early Engagement

**1.4.19** In July 2024 we conducted an informal, non-statutory early engagement exercise for residents, stakeholders and communities to share initial ideas and suggestions on what they would like to be considered in the plan.

**1.4.20** This resulted in 481 responses from residents who live across the district, statutory consultees, developers and their agents.

The following image captures the key words included within responses:



**1.4.21** Most comments received were about development in the district and housing. Other areas of interest include infrastructure provision such as access to GPs and dentists, traffic, and roads and public transport.

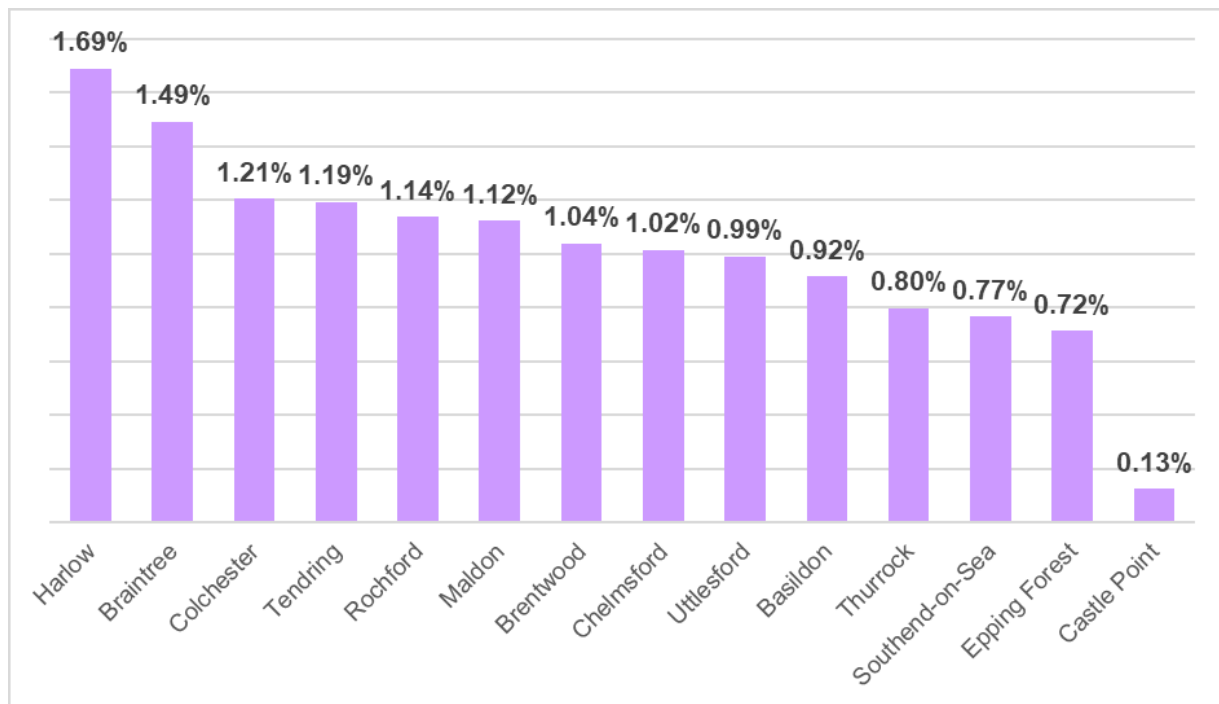
## Key Facts About Braintree District

**1.5.1** To inform our plan for the future, we must have a good understanding of the characteristics of Braintree District today, and the issues and opportunities that these present. These are set out in the evidence base and background papers supporting this consultation document which are summarised below.

## Population

**1.5.2** The population of the district has grown by around 10,700 (7%) since 2013 to around 160,000 (mid-2023). The median age of the population of the district was 43.1 in 2023.

**1.5.3** The estimated increase in population 2022/2023 was the highest in Greater Essex and the second highest in Essex in percentage terms:



**Figure 1 Increase in population 2022/23 - Greater Essex District**

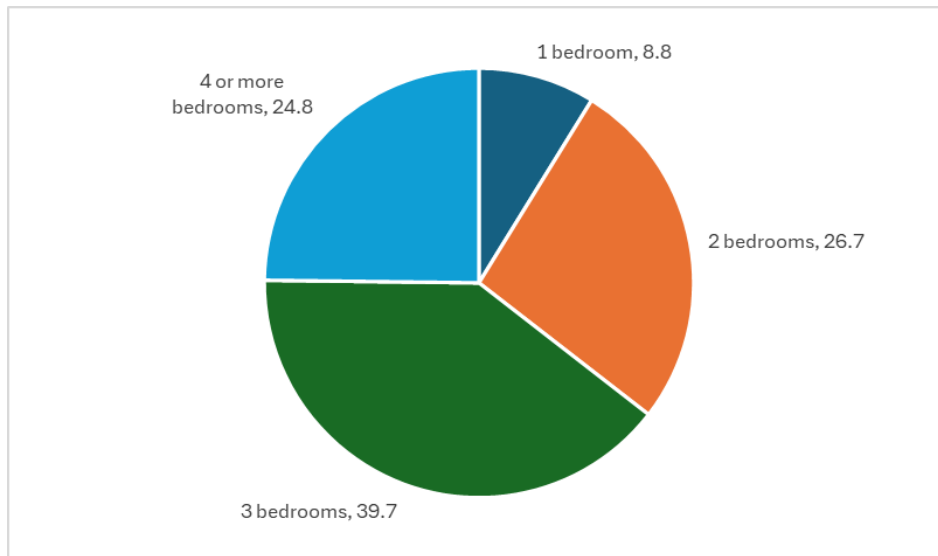
## Dwellings

Accommodation type 2021		
	Total by Type	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64,986</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Detached dwellings	19,060	29.3
Semi-detached dwellings	22,537	34.7
Terraced dwellings	14,498	22.3
In a purpose-built block of flats or tenement	7,317	11.3
Part of a converted or shared house, including bedsits	535	0.8
Part of another converted building, for example, former school, church or warehouse	531	0.8
In a commercial building, for example, in an office building, hotel or over a shop	307	0.5
A caravan or other mobile or temporary structure	201	0.3

**Table 2 Existing residential stock**

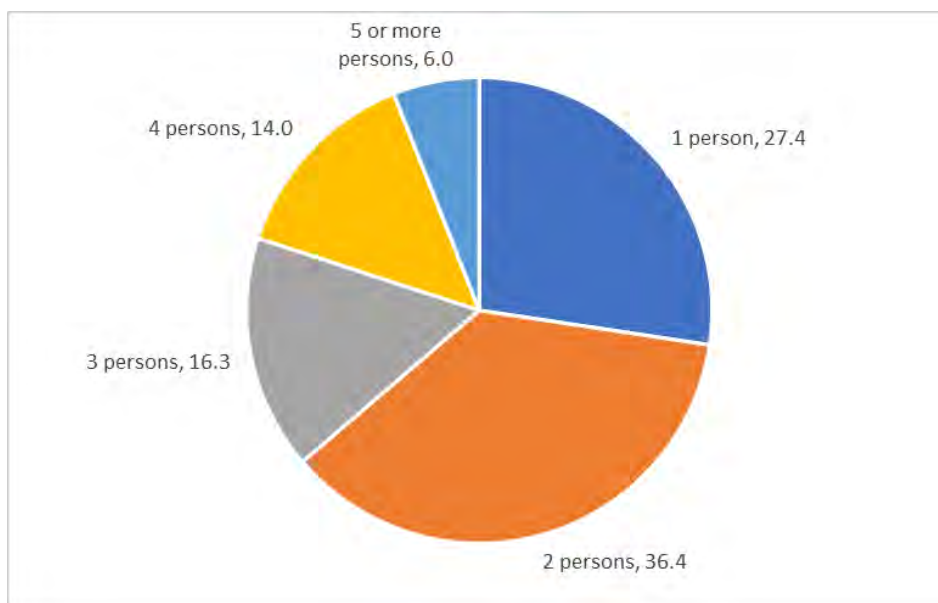


Source: ONS 2021 Census Area Profile



**Figure 2 Dwelling stock by number of bedrooms**

Source: ONS/Nomis, 2021 Census Table TS050



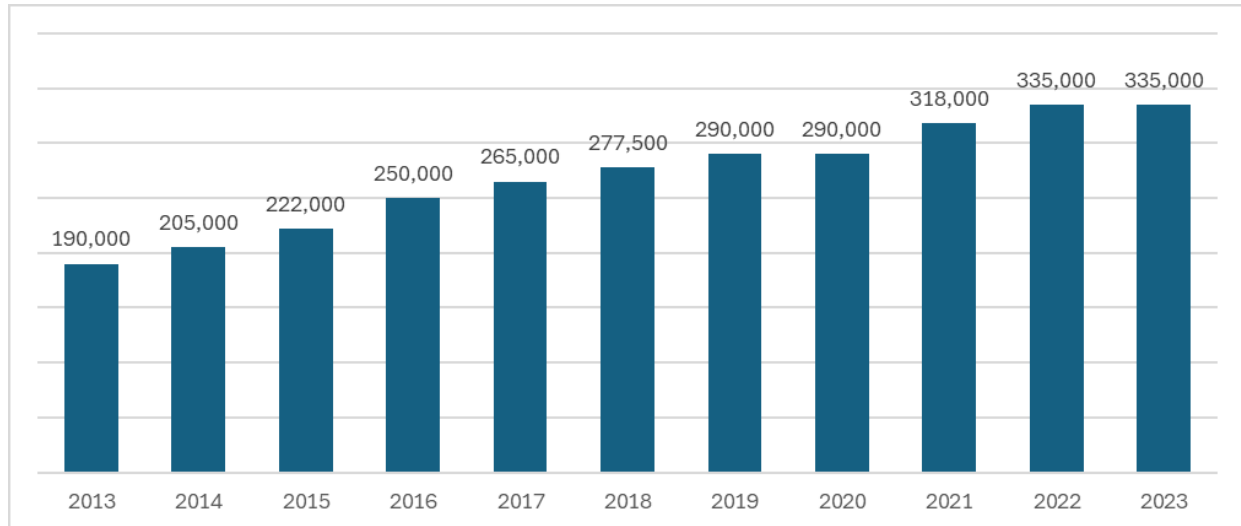
**Figure 3 Number of persons in households, as % of total**

Source: ONS/Nomis Census 2021



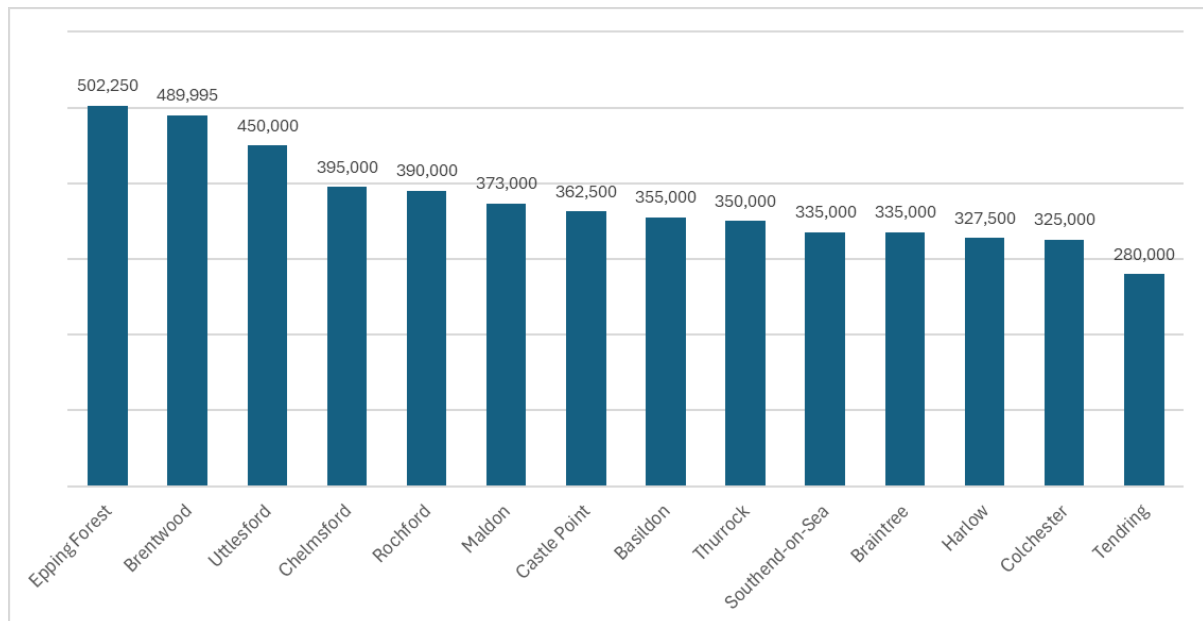
## House price data:

**1.5.4** Within the Braintree district, there are around 65,000 homes with the median average house price in 2023 being £335,000. This has increased from £190,000 in 2013 and is around £50,000 higher than the average for England and Wales.



**Figure 4 Median house price**

**1.5.5** Although higher than the national average, house prices in Braintree district are lower than most Essex districts.



**Figure 5 Median average house price year ending Sept 2023 within Greater Essex**

## Employment and industry:

**1.5.6** There are 57,000 jobs and over 6,600 businesses registered in the Braintree district. The majority of these are 'micro' businesses employing less than ten people. There are 20 large firms in the district.

	Number	Percentage of total
<b>Enterprises</b>		
Micro (0-9)	5,915	89.5%
Small (10-49)	570	8.6%
Medium (50-249)	105	1.6%
Large (250+)	20	0.3%
Total	6,610	
<b>Local units</b>		
Micro (0-9)	6,410	85.6%
Small (10-49)	900	12.0%
Medium (50-249)	165	2.2%
Large (250+)	10	0.1%
Total	7,485	

**Table 3 Business Numbers (2024)**

**1.5.7** Source: ONS 2024, Inter Departmental Business Register

**1.5.8** The unemployment rate in the district is low at 2.5%. The average earnings of people who live in Braintree district is higher than the average earnings of people who work in the district.

- Median average gross annual earnings of people who *work* in Braintree district in 2023: £33,032
- Median average gross annual earnings of people who *live* in Braintree district in 2023: £36,674

## Personal well-being

**1.5.9** The Indices of Multiple Deprivation is the official measure of relative deprivation level for the district as a whole and for local areas within the district, compared to other areas in England.

**1.5.10** The district as a whole is relatively well off compared to deprived areas of the country. There are however, pockets of deprivation across the district including within the Glebe Estate in Bocking and the White Horse Avenue estate in Halstead which are in the top 20% of areas in England.

**1.5.11** While results from schools in the district are good, only 25% of residents are qualified at NVQ4 and above. This is 10% below the Essex average.

**1.5.12** The rural areas of the district scored higher on the Barriers to Housing and Services domain, and the Living Environment Domain generally. On the air quality underlying indicators in the Index of Deprivation 2019, the worst areas in the district are at Witham, scoring the highest in the district on particulates, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and overall air quality, with areas in Braintree town scoring highest in the district on Benzene pollution.

# The Plan Period and Structure

## Plan Period

**2.0.1** The current Local Plan period runs to 2033. Government policy requires a 15-year minimum period. The new Local Plan period is proposed to cover the period until 2041. Assuming a 2026 start date, this will mean a 15-year plan period is met.

## Plan Structure

**2.0.2** Currently the Braintree District Local Plan is in two sections:

### Section One

**2.0.3** This section is a joint document shared with Colchester City Council and Tendring District Council. It deals with overall strategic matters such as housing and employment numbers over the wider north Essex area. The section contains a Vision, 5 Objectives and 9 policies. Both Colchester and Tendring are also currently reviewing their Local Plans.

### Section Two

**2.0.4** This section relates to Braintree District Council only. It contains the vision, 12 objectives, 78 policies, plus maps and sites for matters including housing, employment and economic growth regeneration, infrastructure and the protection of the environment.

**2.0.5** Within this consultation you are invited to comment on whether the vision, objectives and policies in both sections continue to be appropriate and if not, suggest changes you feel will help ensure we meet the district's needs. In addition, we are asking if the Local Plan period should be extended to 2041 to cover a 15-year period or whether an alternative longer period would be better.

## The Section One Local Plan

**3.0.1** The Section One Local Plan is a joint document between Braintree District Council, Colchester City Council and Tendring District Council. It provides a joint development framework for development in North Essex, sets housing and employment figures for each of the area, and includes a policy on a joint garden community proposal between Colchester and Tendring.

**3.0.2** The Local Plan vision is a high-level guiding statement that sets out what is important for a place and how change will be managed in the future. It is a core part of the Local Plan and all the policies in the Plan will together deliver the Vision. The adopted Local Plan vision is:

## Section One Vision

### Vision for North Essex

North Essex will be an area of significant growth over the period to 2033 and beyond, embracing positively the need to build well-designed new homes, create jobs and improve and develop infrastructure for the benefit of existing and new communities. It will continue to be an attractive and vibrant area in which to live and work, making the most of its rich heritage, town centres, natural environment, coastal resorts, excellent educational facilities and strategic transport links which provide access to the ports, Stansted Airport, London and beyond. Rural and urban communities will be encouraged to thrive and prosper and will be supported by adequate community infrastructure. Sustainable development principles will be at the core of the strategic area's response to its growth needs, balancing social, economic and environmental issues. Green and blue infrastructure and new and expanded education and health care facilities enabling healthy and active lifestyles will be planned and provided along with other facilities to support the development of substantial new growth; while the undeveloped countryside and the natural and historic environment will be conserved and enhanced. Key to delivering sustainable development is that new development will address the requirement to protect and enhance the historic environment and settlement character. At the heart of our strategic vision for North Essex is a new garden community, to be sensitively integrated within the existing historic built and natural environment, and based on Garden City principles. The garden community provides an opportunity to create the right balance of jobs, housing and infrastructure in the right locations and will attract residents and businesses who value innovation, community cohesion and a high quality environment, and who will be provided with opportunities to take an active role in managing the garden community to ensure its continuing success.

Residents will live in high quality, innovatively designed, homes, accommodating a variety of needs and aspirations, located in well-designed neighbourhoods where they can meet their day-to-day needs. There will be a network of tree-lined streets and green spaces, incorporating and enhancing existing landscape features and also accommodating safe and attractive routes and space for sustainable drainage solutions; and leisure and recreation opportunities for both residents and visitors of the garden community. Suitable models for the long term stewardship of community assets will be established and funded to provide long term management and governance of assets. All Garden City principles as specified in the North Essex Garden Communities Charter will be positively embraced including where appropriate, new approaches to delivery and partnership working for the benefit of the new community. Central to this will be the comprehensive planning and development of the garden community, and the aligned delivery of homes and supporting infrastructure.

## Section One Objectives

**3.2.1** The strategic objectives are the key objectives that the Local Plan is based on. These objectives set the overall policy direction for all the strategic policies, site allocations and development management policies in the Local Plan.

**3.2.2** The current [strategic objectives in Section 1](#) are:

### Providing Sufficient New Homes

– to provide for a level and quality of new homes to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population in North Essex; to achieve this by ensuring the availability of developable land in appropriate locations and that the market delivers a suitable mix of housing types and tenures.

### Fostering Economic Development

– to strengthen and diversify local economies to provide more jobs; and to achieve a better balance between the location of jobs and housing, which will reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable growth.

### Providing New and Improved Transport & Communication Infrastructure

– to make efficient use of existing transport infrastructure and to ensure sustainable transport opportunities are promoted to support new and existing communities. Where additional capacity is required in the form of new or upgraded transport infrastructure to support new development, ensuring that this is delivered in a phased & timely way to minimise the impact of new development. To ensure that enabled communication is provided as part of new developments as enabled communication is essential for modern living and broadband infrastructure and related services will be essential for business, education and residential properties.

### Addressing Education and Healthcare Needs

– to provide good quality educational opportunities as part of a sustainable growth strategy, including practical vocational training and apprenticeships linked to local job opportunities. To work with partners in the NHS, Public Health and local health partnerships to ensure adequate provision of healthcare facilities to support new and growing communities.

### Ensuring High Quality Outcomes

– to promote greater ambition in planning and delivering high-quality sustainable new communities. Overall, new development must secure high standards of urban design and green infrastructure which creates attractive and sustainable places where people want to live and spend time. New development needs to be informed by an understanding of the historic environment resource gained through the preparation of Historic Impact Assessments, and to conserve and enhance the significance of heritage assets including any contribution made to their significance by their settings.



## Section One Policies

**3.3.1** The following policies are contained within Section 1 of the Plan. They set the housing and employment targets for North Essex, and the spatial strategy. SP8 and SP9 are not being consulted on in this Issues and Options consultation as they relate to a garden community contained wholly within Colchester and Tendring districts.

- [SP1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development](#)
- [SP2 - Recreational disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy \(RAMS\)](#)
- [SP3 - Spatial Strategy for North Essex](#)
- [SP4 - Meeting Housing Needs](#)
- [SP5 – Employment](#)
- [SP6 - Infrastructure & Connectivity](#)
- [SP7 - Place Shaping Principles](#)
- [SP8 - Development & Delivery of a New Garden Community in North Essex](#)
- [SP9 - Tendring/Colchester Borders Garden Community](#)

## The Section Two Local Plan

**4.0.1** Section 2 of the Local Plan sets out the Vision and Objectives for Braintree district. It goes on to set out the Spatial Strategy and the Local Plan Key Diagram for the district. The main policy part of Section 2 is split into three main themes; A Prosperous District, Creating Better Places and the Natural Environment. Within them they include 78 policies.

### Section Two Vision

#### Vision for Braintree District

By 2033, the District will be the most successful in Essex. Jobs and businesses will have increased in both quantity and quality, making the District a desirable place to live and work. Housing growth has been achieved, with the expansion of the main town of Braintree providing sustainable, attractive new homes within a market town setting. Witham, Kelvedon and Feering have also continued to expand, making the most of their excellent transport links to provide high-quality homes and new community facilities. Smaller scale growth will continue in other areas of the District, including Halstead, meeting the local needs of smaller, rural communities. The strategic transport routes of the A120, A12 and rail routes from Braintree and Witham have been improved, allowing fast and reliable connections to London, London Stansted Airport, the east coast ports and other key regional centres. Developments in the District will have been designed and built to the highest quality, making the best use of new technologies to ensure suitability and sustainability now and in the future. High-speed reliable broadband is accessible for all homes and businesses. All residents in the District will have access to the highest quality community facilities including health and education provision and green infrastructure. Outstanding leisure facilities continue to be provided to ensure residents can make healthy choices, and retail and other community needs are met. The unique natural and historic environment continues to be protected and enhanced. Braintree District continues to be an aspirational place to live with a successful economy, wide range of affordable, sustainable homes situated within a high-quality urban and rural landscape, all within easy reach of London and the wider region.

## Section Two Objectives

**4.2.1** The following key objectives are identified in the Section 2 Local Plan:

- Creating a successful economy
- Retail and Town Centres
- Housing Need
- Transport Infrastructure
- Broadband
- Education and Skills
- Protection of the Environment
- Good Quality Design
- Healthy Communities
- Social Infrastructure
- Sustainability
- Empowering Local People.

**4.2.2** Each of these objectives is supported by a policy or policies and background text which aim to help the Local Plan meet those objectives when determining planning applications or providing for identified needs within the district.

**4.2.3** Each of the Objectives is set out in this document with additional information.

## Section Two Policies

**4.3.1** The following policies support the objectives set out in the Local Plan:

- [LPP 1 Development Boundaries](#)
- [LPP 2 Location of Employment Land](#)
- [LPP 3 Employment Policy Areas](#)
- [LPP 4 Kelvedon Park](#)
- [LPP 5 Allshot's Farm, Rivenhall](#)
- [LPP 6 Business Parks](#)
- [LPP 7 Rural Enterprise](#)
- [LPP 8 Tourist Development within the Countryside](#)
- [LPP 9 Retailing and Regeneration](#)
- [LPP 10 Primary Shopping Areas](#)
- [LPP 11 District Centre - Great Notley](#)
- [LPP 12 Braintree Village Designer Outlet Centre](#)
- [LPP 13 Leisure and Entertainment](#)

- [LPP 14 Retail Warehouse Development](#)
- [LPP 15 Retail Site Allocations](#)
- [LPP 16 Housing Provision and Delivery](#)
- [LPP 17 Strategic Growth Location - Land East of Great Notley, South of Braintree](#)
- [LPP 18 Strategic Growth Location - Land East of Broad Road, Braintree](#)
- [LPP 19 Strategic Growth Location - Former Towerlands Park Site](#)
- [LPP 20 Strategic Growth Location – North-West Braintree](#)
- [LPP 21 Strategic Growth Location - Land at Feering](#)
- [LPP 22 Strategic Growth Location - Wood End Farm, Witham](#)
- [LPP 23 Comprehensive Redevelopment Area - Land East of Halstead High Street](#)
- [LPP 24 Specialist Housing - Mount Hill, Halstead](#)
- [LPP 25 Comprehensive Redevelopment Area - Factory Lane West/Kings Road, Halstead](#)
- [LPP 26 Comprehensive Redevelopment Area - Kings Chase, Witham](#)
- [LPP 27 Comprehensive Redevelopment Area - Newlands Precinct, Witham](#)
- [LPP 28 Comprehensive Redevelopment Area - Rickstones Neighbourhood Centre, Witham](#)
- [LPP 29 Comprehensive Redevelopment Area - Land between A12 and GEM, Hatfield Peverel](#)
- [LPP 30 Residential Allocation - Gimsons, Witham](#)
- [LPP 31 Affordable Housing](#)
- [LPP 32 Affordable Housing in Rural Areas](#)
- [LPP 33 Specialist Housing](#)
- [LPP 34 Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpersons' Accommodation](#)
- [LPP 35 Housing Mix, Density and Accessibility](#)
- [LPP 36 Residential Alterations, Extensions and Outbuildings](#)
- [LPP 37 Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside](#)
- [LPP 38 Rural Workers Dwellings in the Countryside](#)
- [LPP 39 Infill Development in Hamlets](#)
- [LPP 40 Residential Conversion of Buildings in the Countryside](#)
- [LPP 41 Garden Extensions](#)
- [LPP 42 Sustainable Transport](#)
- [LPP 43 Parking Provision](#)
- [LPP 44 Transport Related Policy Areas](#)
- [LPP 45 New Road Infrastructure](#)
- [LPP 46 Broadband](#)
- [LPP 47 Built and Historic Environment](#)
- [LPP 48 An Inclusive Environment](#)

- [LPP 49 Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment](#)
- [LPP 50 Provision for Open Space, Sport and Recreation](#)
- [LPP 51 Equestrian Facilities](#)
- [LPP 52 Layout and Design of Development](#)
- [LPP 53 Conservation Areas](#)
- [LPP 54 Demolition In Conservation Areas](#)
- [LPP 55 Shop Fronts, Fascias and Signs in Conservation Areas](#)
- [LPP 56 Illuminated Signs in Conservation Areas](#)
- [LPP 57 Heritage Assets and their Settings](#)
- [LPP 58 Demolition of Listed Buildings or Structures](#)
- [LPP 59 Archaeological Evaluation, Excavation and Recording](#)
- [LPP 60 Educational Establishments](#)
- [LPP 61 Local Community Services and Facilities](#)
- [LPP 62 Cemeteries and Churchyards](#)
- [LPP 63 Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure](#)
- [LPP 64 Protected Sites](#)
- [LPP 65 Tree Protection](#)
- [LPP 66 Protection, Enhancement, Management and Monitoring of Biodiversity](#)
- [LPP 67 Landscape Character and Features](#)
- [LPP 68 Green Buffers](#)
- [LPP 69 Protected Lanes](#)
- [LPP 70 Protecting and Enhancing Natural Resources, Minimising Pollution and Safeguarding from Hazards](#)
- [LPP 71 Climate Change](#)
- [LPP 72 Resource Efficiency, Energy Generation and Energy Efficiency](#)
- [LPP 73 Renewable Energy Schemes](#)
- [LPP 74 Flooding Risk and Surface Water Drainage](#)
- [LPP 75 Surface Water Management Plan](#)
- [LPP 76 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems](#)
- [LPP 77 External Lighting](#)
- [LPP 78 Infrastructure Delivery and Impact Mitigation](#)

## Section Two Mapping

### Inset Maps

**4.4.1** The policies and development allocations are shown on a series of printed inset maps and are also available online via district-wide [interactive mapping](#). They are a visual representation of the spatial strategy (setting out ‘what goes where’) and policies for the district. This includes development boundaries, housing allocations, environmental protection and conservation. The maps are part of the Local Plan and will be updated as part of the review.

#### Key: Local Plan 2013-2033

	District Boundary		Designer Outlet Centre		Formal Recreation
	Inset Map		Strategic Growth Location		Informal Recreation
	Development Boundary		Residential Site 10 or more Dwellings		Visually Important Space
	Conservation Area		Specialist Housing		Structural Landscaping
	Road Proposal		Proposed Gypsy/Travellers Site		Local Wildlife Site
	Halstead Bypass Corridor		Business Parks		Cemetery/Churchyard
	Protected Lanes		Employment Policy Area		Local Nature Reserve
	Proposed WCH Route		Comprehensive Development Area		Green Buffer
	Local Centre		Special Employment Area		Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace
	District Centre		Vehicle Storage		Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
	Town Centre		Transport Related Policy Area		Historic Parks and Gardens
	Primary Shopping Area		Education		Scheduled monument
	Primary Frontage		Car Park		Flood Zone 2
	Secondary Frontage		Community Uses		Flood Zone 3
	Retail & Town Centre Uses		Leisure and Entertainment		Flood Zone 3B
	Retail Warehousing		Allotments		

Figure 6 Key to Adopted Local Plan Mapping

# Economy and Retail

## Creating a Successful Economy

Current Objective:

“To promote a local economy which supports the growth of existing businesses and encourages new entrepreneurial enterprises and employers to locate in the district, by providing high-quality land and buildings in sustainable locations, to meet the needs of businesses.”

**5.1.1** The gross added value (GVA) of the Braintree district economy is worth £3.6bn in 2021. While this has fluctuated it remains broadly flat for the period 2017 to 2024, however this compares poorly to strong GVA growth between 2015 and 2017. This slowdown is likely owing to a range of macroeconomic factors such as Covid-19, the cost of living crisis and exiting the EU. Nevertheless, the Council has retained strong ambitions for long-term sustainable and inclusive growth.

**5.1.2** In terms of commuting, over a third (36.2%) of Braintree district's residents in employment also work in the district – this is lower than the approximately 50% containment in Chelmsford and 66% in Colchester. Out-commuting for work is experienced by around 2/3rds of Braintree district's employed residents and is likely because GVA per job is higher (i.e. wages are better) in the cities of Chelmsford and Colchester and significantly higher in central areas of London & Canary Wharf. In contrast, GVA growth in the district has not kept pace with larger economies over the last 20 years and rather than catching up, the Braintree economy is falling behind.

**5.1.3** The long-lasting effects of out-commuting for work and education is additional peak-time strains on the transport network particularly as the number of commuters grow. Creating locally based high skilled jobs with higher wages will help reduce the need to travel and improve sustainability. Working from home, access to services, sustainable travel and travel-to-work will be addressed separately through a refresh of the Braintree Transport Assessment.

**5.1.4** Although the Braintree district economy covers wide ranging sectors from agriculture and energy generation to retail and personal services, the Local Plan mainly concerns itself with employment that requires land-use planning. This means forecasting and meeting needs for offices, manufacturing, storage and distribution and supporting rural farms, tourism and leisure.

## National Policy For Employment Land

**5.1.5** The NPPF requires planning to place significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity. Planning must address potential barriers to investment and identify strategic sites for development which meets local need and inward investment. Overall, the national policies for building a strong, competitive economy (Chapter 6) have remained largely unaltered in the NPPF updates.



**5.1.6** Since 2012, changes to the economic growth chapter are mainly focused on promoting specific industries where planning policies should **identify sites or set criteria** to meet emerging needs of a modern economy, these industries include:

- Laboratories
- Gigafactories
- Data centres
- Digital infrastructure
- Freight and logistics

**5.1.7** Planning policies should also address the locational requirements of:

- Clusters of data-driven industries
- Clusters of creative industries
- Clusters of High Technology industries
- Grid connections
- Storage and distribution

**5.1.8** Of these nationally identified focus industries, Braintree district only has significant businesses in logistics. For IT and communications, only around 1250 people are employed, or around half the national average in percentage terms. The district's strengths are in advanced manufacturing and engineering; health and social care; and construction. Review of statistical information suggests that many of the focus industries are not prominent in Braintree district.

## Local Character Of The Economy

**5.1.9** The industrial character of Braintree district

- Braintree economy has an industrial character with large industrial estates.
- Braintree's employment base is 54,000.
- Unemployment rates are like the national average at 3.5%.
- 41% of the population is aged over 50, while the growth of the working-age population has slowed over the past decade.
- Out commuting is a feature of the district and more residents leave the district to work, than work within the district. However, over two thirds of jobs located within the district are taken by local residents.
- Over a third (36.2%) also work in the District thus a majority of residents travel to other areas to work. The most popular destinations are London and Chelmsford at 9.2% each, followed by Uttlesford and Colchester around 5% each.
- The biggest employers are Health, Retail, Manufacturing, Construction and Professional (scientific and technical) services.
- The industries which have grown the most in the period 2017-2021 are professional services (25%), water supply and waste management (25%) and health sectors (40%). However it

should be noted that water supply and waste management industries are growing from a low baseline.

## Current Local Plan Employment Policies

**5.1.10** The current adopted Local Plan seeks to preserve existing urban and rural employment sites for office, manufacturing, storage and distribution, or supporting uses. Large concentrations of industrial land is retained at Braintree, Witham and Halstead. The Plan identifies employment need as a range between 20.9ha and 43.3ha and allocates greenfield land targeted to meeting the higher growth scenario.

**5.1.11** More than half of this need is allocated on 2 sites covering 25.3ha total: Horizon120 (Braintree) and Eastways (Witham); these sites have been granted planning permission and Horizon 120 has progressed to being nearly fully let.

**5.1.12** Allocations at Bluebridge (Halstead), Springwood Drive (Braintree) and Maltings Lane (Witham) have made little to no progress (6.8ha total).

**5.1.13** Other allocations to support Strategic Growth Locations have made no progress with the exception of 3ha at Land East of Broad Road (Braintree) which has planning permission (10ha total).

**5.1.14** In addition to the allocations, an unallocated site proposal to expand Horizon 120 by 14.6ha was granted planning permission by the Council which reflects the commercial success of this location. This significant addition to the pipeline of employment sites will contribute to fulfilling any employment needs identified in the Local Plan review.

**5.1.15** Beyond the allocation of employment land, the Council has also invested in the creation of the Cell and Gene Therapy Manufacturing Innovation Centre and I-Construct Business Innovation Hub, as well as co-working facilities for micro-businesses and start-up units at Great Notley and Maltings Lane, Witham. These investments are in alignment with the priority sectors identified within the Essex Economic Growth Strategy:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Construction
- Digital, creative and cultural
- Health and life sciences
- Logistics
- Low carbon and renewables

**5.1.16** As well as the catalyst industries above, potential economic drivers in the region include the A12 Chelmsford to A120 widening scheme which



will create jobs as well as reduce peak time travel times, Freeport East (Felixstowe and Harwich) and the expansion to Stansted Airport. These other catalysts suggest that the geographical focus of economic activity along the A12 / Greater Essex Mainline and A120 corridors will be strengthened.

## Employment Land Review

**5.1.17** The Employment Land Review (ELR) was published 2024/25 and calculates the need for employment land for the plan period up to 2041. The report makes separate recommendations for office uses and industrial uses. For offices 2.4ha additional space will be required over the plan period. For industrial land, 22.5ha for storage and distribution will be required however the existing pipeline of sites is already adequate to meet this need. There is no demand identified for land to cater for manufacturing need.

**5.1.18** In addition to the above, the ELR suggests that a criteria-based policy could be brought in to attract inward investment opportunities which should have no upper limit. Translocating older stock on existing employment land to new sites with excellent strategic highway access could also be a viable strategy. These two needs could result in the allocation of new employment land.

**5.1.19** The report recommends a number of optional sites where new employment land could be allocated, and they also recommend existing sites which the Council could deallocate; these are:

- Land around East Street, Braintree Industrial Estate
- Station Road, Kelvedon
- Hunnable Industrial Estate, Great Yeldham

**5.1.20** Any losses of existing employment land or allocations to other uses should be managed through the allocation of replacement land.

**5.1.21** The report also suggests that the protective policies of the Local Plan have been fairly effective at managing change of use on employment land, and where losses have occurred, it was replaced by the construction of new, modern premises.

### Offices

- Planning should retain policies which protect and direct new provision of Class E commercial office space (Formerly Use Class B1) to Town Centre locations which provide access to public transport and amenities. New, limited SME space (small, start-up and micro enterprises) could be promoted in town centres and edges of centres. There is no demand for corporate offices.
- In new mixed-use developments, flexible space operators could provide office space for SMEs. The Council could require that a specialist flexible space operator is engaged as part of the planning requirement for mixed-use developments.

- Ancillary office provision (combined with B8 storage and distribution units) can be provided on new mixed use developments or new settlements where feasible.
- New inward investment, including focus industries, could be promoted on large sites where businesses moving out from London and Chelmsford can be captured. Proximity to the Strategic Road Network and low rental value are strong factors in the determination of location.

### Industrial Property

- Planning should retain policies which protect existing industrial stock and promote new space on adjacent sites or existing allocations.
- Policies should continue to resist non-industrial uses, such as gyms, children's play and exercise studies in locations where there can be conflicts with neighbouring uses, including parking, movement and access.
- To compete for manufacturing, storage and distribution in the Market Area, the Council could undertake a review of logistics potential. It could contract older stock in less well-performing traditional industrial estates and support new stock at locations with easy access to the Strategic Road Network. Further evidence will need to be commissioned to support a business case.



## National Policy For The Rural Economy

**5.1.22** For the rural economy, the Local Plan takes a development management approach rather than a policy of strategic intervention. The NPPF continues to require support for the growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas to enable rural diversification, including through rural tourism and leisure developments. Paragraph 88 and 89 have remained largely unchanged since the publication of NPPF 2012 meaning that the Local Plan policies for the rural economy should remain sound.

### **Rural Workspace**

- There is likely to be further growth in demand for rural workspaces and policies should continue to support opportunities to convert redundant agricultural buildings where environmental and access considerations are acceptable.
- Policies should focus on practical issues rather than micromanaging what is acceptable.

## Retail and Town Centres

### Current Objective:

“To support the changing role of town centres as a location for retail, employment, community services and cultural facilities by encouraging new development and regeneration schemes to support the function of the towns as major service centres. The major regional shopping destination of Braintree Village and Braintree Retail Park continues to be supported. Shops and retail facilities will also be provided on new developments where appropriate.”

**5.2.1** The NPPF contains the principles of retail and town centre development currently contained in Chapter 7 of the NPPF. No changes are proposed to this chapter in the 2024 consultation, as such it is relatively safe to assume that this section will remain unchanged once the new NPPF is adopted. Paragraph 90 of the current NPPF sets out the principles that planning policies and decisions should follow. This approach advocates a town centre first approach, which recognises the role that town centres play at the heart of their local communities.

**5.2.2** The NPPF continues to direct development of retail and other uses towards town centres in the first instance, and for development outside of town centres they must comply with both the “sequential test” and impact assessment. Any new retail or town centre use applications on the edge of or outside the defined town centre should demonstrate that there if no sequentially preferable sites available, and that no “significant adverse” impacts will arise on the existing defined centres.

**5.2.3** The NPPF states that local planning authorities should be taking a positive approach to their growth management and adaptation. Paragraph 90 sets out what planning policies should contain and includes things like defining a hierarchy of town centres, town centre and primary shopping areas, the retention of markets, and allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of development needed over a period of at least 10 years, before considering edge or out of centre locations.

**5.2.4** The retail policies in the adopted Local Plan were assessed in the context of the 2012 NPPF, which is broadly like the current NPPF in approach in that the Local Plan should recognise town centres as the heart of the community, define a network and hierarchy of centres, define town centres and primary shopping areas, as well as allocating sites and retaining markets. The main change appears to be that allocations now only need to be made for a 10 year period. Other things like the default impact assessment threshold are the same.

**5.2.5** The Council has updated it's retail evidence base (2024). This indicates that the Local Plan policies are broadly consistent with the new NPPF, but the amount of retail floor space is significantly reduced. This updated retail study considers things like Brexit, the pandemic and the changes in 2020 to the Use Classes Order. The Local Plan was at examination at that time, and the changes to the use classes order were incorporated into the Local Plan modifications. In August



2021, the Government introduced further changes to allow premises in Use Class E to be changed to residential without the need for a full planning application. This means that a loss of commercial frontage could be possible which the Council would not normally support.

**5.2.6** In terms of floorspaces the updated Retail report indicates that it is unlikely additional floor space will be required, however this should be kept under review along with any existing allocations.





# Housing

## Housing Need

Current Objective:

“To provide a range of housing sizes, types and tenures which meet local need, including affordable homes, and homes for those residents with specialist accommodation needs. New homes will be created in balanced sustainable communities.”

**6.1.1** The Government’s aim is to significantly boost the supply of homes with the aim of meeting the identified housing need. This includes providing homes of an appropriate mix of housing types.

**6.1.2** The current NPPF states that in assessing the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing needs assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance.

**6.1.3** The Council is in the process of updating its Strategic Housing Market Assessment, and this will inform the Local Plan work on the characteristics of local housing need.

**6.1.4** The NPPF requires councils to use the standard method formula for their local plans. The formula means that the Council will be required to deliver around 56% more homes than required by the existing housing target.

**6.1.5** In addition to a local housing need figure, any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas should also be considered in establishing the amount of housing to be planned for.

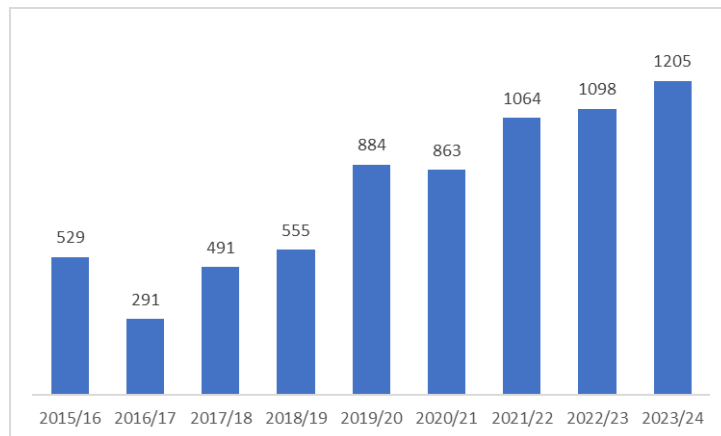
The need, size and type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflect in planning policy. A change to paragraph 63 of the NPPF would mean the inclusion of looked after children.

**6.1.6** Provision for affordable housing should be planned for where a need is identified, except for proposals which are not considered to be major development.

**6.1.7** Braintree District Council must establish a housing requirement figure for the district over the plan period. The requirement could be higher if provision for neighbouring areas is required or to reflect growth ambitions linked to economic development or infrastructure investment.

**6.1.8** The current Local Plan identifies a yearly housing target of 716 dwellings per year until 2033. The new target set by the government indicates that an average of 1,115 new homes per year will be required within the new plan. This means that an additional 10,338 dwellings will need to be provided up to 2041, because the annual target is higher and because the plan period is being extended from up to 2033, to up to 2041.

**6.1.9** The future delivery rate target is much higher than the overall annual average over the adopted plan period 2013-2033 although delivery rates have increased in recent years. The new standard method target would mean aiming to sustain the high delivery rates achieved recently (see chart below).



**Figure 7 Past housing delivery Braintree District as measured in the Housing Delivery Test results**

**6.1.10** There is already a stock of housing sites identified in the district from allocations in the current adopted Plan and from additional sites granted permission since the Local Plan Examination, but there will be a need for the new Plan to increase supply with new sites.

**6.1.11** In the current adopted Plan, the Plan aimed to identify potential supply to provide 10% headroom over and above the remaining target, as a buffer against possible future increases in the target and against the possibility of some sites coming forward less quickly than anticipated. Since the Section 2 Local Plan Examination in 2021, although some sites have been coming forward more slowly than expected, over 1,700 dwelling plots have been added to the supply from permissions for major development on new sites.

## Affordable Housing

**6.1.12** The affordability of housing is a local, as well as a national concern. House prices have risen faster than earnings. High levels of commuting in districts such as Braintree exacerbate this in that people working locally can find it particularly hard to get on the housing ladder. This underlines the importance of the plan having effective policies to secure affordable homes, and to secure a mix of house types that is not biased towards the more expensive end of the housing market.

**6.1.13** In recent years the Council has secured the delivery of a high number of affordable homes by use of planning obligations (Section 106 Agreements) as part of housing developments.

**6.1.14** The recent Government changes to the NPPF indicate that the Government is keen to see provision of social-rent homes, rather than the higher-rental cost affordable homes. In the housing mix secured via planning permissions on large sites the Council has weighted the affordable mix more towards affordable homes as this yielded a greater number of properties; this change in emphasis could have implications for the number of affordable homes being delivered in the future.



**6.1.15** In addition, from discussions with local housing associations, we are aware that it is becoming difficult to secure delivery of small-scale affordable housing schemes as part of developments or as stand-alone rural schemes, for example. This will be a particular challenge in the rural areas, where the numbers on a particular scheme are likely to be smaller.

**6.1.16** The Council has commissioned an affordable housing viability study which will inform policy development on this issue.

## Housing Mix and Development

**6.1.17** The current adopted plan has a policy that seeks to secure a mix of house types to meet the needs of various sections of the housing market. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment which is the evidence base supporting this policy is currently being updated.

## Older Persons Housing and Specialist/Supported Living housing

**6.1.18** Demographic forecasting shows that there will be increasing numbers of elderly people in the local population. Many older people prefer to live in their current home as long as possible rather than move into supported living, but there will be more people needing specialist housing on some kind.

**6.1.19** The current adopted plan has a criteria-based policy for considering applications that come forward for specialist housing but in general did not seek to allocate sites for supported living or bungalows. Three sites were allocated in response to site proposals submitted for specialist housing: at Pollys Field Braintree which has been completed; at St Dominics Kelvedon which is under construction, and land adjacent Blamsters Halstead which is not yet being developed. In addition to these allocations, suitable sites have come forward within the urban areas at Bridge Street Witham, at Duggers Lane Braintree and at the College site at Church Lane Bocking. A care home is proposed as part of the large development granted on appeal at London Road Kelvedon.

## Self and Custom build

**6.1.20** Self-build and custom build housing is housing built by an individual, a group of individuals or persons working with or for them, to be occupied by that individual.

**6.1.21** There is a demand, locally as well as nationally, for self-build and custom-build homes as part of the housing market supply. In practice, most of this demand is met through the supply of small sites. Some of these come forward with planning applications that identify the proposal as self-build/custom build, others may not or may be sold on after gaining permission to someone who is looking for a suitable site for this kind of development.

**6.1.22** In the past councils found that permissions granted for development identified as for self-build/custom build but not tied to that form of development by a planning obligation could not officially be counted towards the supply of self-build/custom build homes. In order to be able to count development towards supply, with new proposals that are permitted for self-build/custom build the Council now secures the commitment to this form of development with a form of planning obligation as part of the permission. Recent examples include:

- Five self-build/custom build plots have been secured as part of the permission for Phase 4 Rectory Lane Rivenhall
- Two self-build/custom build plots have been granted permission with a unilateral undertaking at Woodpecker Barn Mill Lane Cressing
- One self-build dwelling at Tilkey Road Coggeshall has been granted permission with a Section 106 Agreement attached
- One self-build dwelling at Polecat Road Cressing has been granted permission with a Section 106 Agreement attached
- One self-build dwelling at Sportsmans Lane has been granted permission with a Section 106 Agreement attached

**6.1.23** The current plan included a policy requiring on sites of 500 dwellings or more that serviced plots equating to 2% of overall homes be made available for self or custom builders, although by the time of the Section 2 Local Plan adoption, outline permission had already been granted on some of those strategic sites, leaving only Land East of Great Notley and Land at Feering needing to comply with this policy requirement.

## The Spatial Strategy

**6.1.24** A spatial strategy is a strategy which determines where housing development should go in the district. The spatial strategy in the adopted Local Plan is:

*“That the broad spatial strategy for the Braintree District should concentrate development on the town of Braintree, Witham and the A12/Great Eastern Mainline corridor and Halstead.”*

**6.1.25** As can be seen above, the majority of site allocations within the plan are around the main towns and A12 corridor. The Local Plan contains strategic policies for the larger growth areas to come forward. Depending on the scale of new developments proposed in the new Local Plan Review, new policies may be required for new growth locations.

**6.1.26** Smaller allocations are at other key service villages and villages as set out in the Council's settlement hierarchy.



**Figure 8 Braintree Key Diagram**

**6.1.27** Strategic policies seek to ensure that large scale developments provide the appropriate infrastructure to support the development taking place. This includes seeking the provision of open space, affordable housing, schools, local services such as GP provision and retail uses, as well as any larger infrastructure requirements.

**6.1.28** Non-strategic allocations do not include policies with a list of requirements, however they are required to contribute to the provision of local services and highways where necessary. Non-strategic allocations are identified as having a minimum site threshold for housing of 10 dwellings. Housing sites smaller than 10 dwellings will not be identified on the proposals maps, however if a site is well located and would constitute a natural extension to an existing development boundary then it could be included in the Plan as a boundary amendment. This way smaller villages can have a quantum of development which can help support local services. Alternative ways of providing affordable housing in rural areas is also available through the provision of rural exception sites, however these sites can come forward outside of the Local Plan process under existing policy.

**6.1.29** Other housing provision is required for affordable housing and provision for elderly/care home accommodation and accommodation for Gypsy and Travellers. The required amount that is needed will be determined through evidence base.



**6.1.30** It continues to be important to provide appropriate housing to meet the needs of residents of the district. This includes providing a range of house types and sizes.

## **Gypsy and Travelling Showpersons Accommodation**

**6.1.31** The current Local Plan sets out its approach to the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites in the district (under policy LPP34 Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpersons' Accommodation). This policy seeks the provision of 26 plots for Gypsy and Travellers (G&T) and 6 pitches for travelling showpersons. This provision is sought through the larger strategic growth locations and the planning application process. This approach was taken as no sites had been submitted for G&T accommodation through the previous call for sites.

**6.1.32** Government guidance sets out the general approach local authorities use when making provision for G&T.

**6.1.33** Since the previous Local Plan was adopted, there has been a change in the way that gypsies and travellers are defined for planning purposes. This change is likely to involve a significant increase in the requirement for plots and pitches in the district.

**6.1.34** The Council has commissioned ORS to update its requirement figure for Gypsy and Travellers and Travelling Showpersons provision. This is likely to increase the target needed to be met in the Plan.

# Transport and Infrastructure

## Transport Infrastructure

Current Objective:

“New developments must contribute towards the improvement of the road network in the District. Developments will make appropriate provision to ensure safety and reduce congestion on the road network. Developments will make appropriate provision for public transport, walking and cycling, both within developments and connections to the wider network.”

**7.1.1** Braintree District’s transport network continues to be heavily used, with many strategic employment and residential allocations completing within close proximity to the strategic and important road network. The Strategic Road Network (SRN) comprises of the A12 and A120, while the A130, A131, and A1124 are important roads on the network.

**7.1.2** These roads also support a local and inter-urban bus network however frequencies and service quality can differ greatly in the district. Some routes are as little as 30/60-minute intervals for inter-urban services, to once a day in each direction for some rural services. Capacity issues for road users also affect the performance, reliability and competitiveness of the bus network.

**7.1.3** Transport infrastructure also includes heavy rail services on the Great Eastern Mainline, the Braintree branchline and the Sudbury branchline. These are supported by a significant provision of surface carparking and cycle parking which are protected by policy. There are also on-demand services provided by DART which provides some services in rural areas of North East Braintree and West Braintree. For local journeys, the networks of footpaths and cycleways in Braintree, Witham and Halstead are reasonable alternatives that continue to receive significant investments and improvements.

**7.1.4** The district is bisected by the A12, A120, Great Eastern Mainline and Braintree Branchline, these are barriers to cycling, walking and horse riding, and also road access. There is limited off-road walking, cycling and horse riding crossing points and bridges for the A12 and Great Eastern Mainline. For road access, crossing the Braintree branch line is ‘at-grade’ only between Witham Station and the A120, and out of eleven crossings of the Great Eastern Mainline, only four are close to functioning like 5.5 m single carriageway with two lanes (many are single lane). Poor quality infrastructure and barriers to movement can have a limiting effect on residential land development and puts pressure on existing key junctions.

## National Policy

**7.1.5** Updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promote a ‘vision-led’ approach to transport planning. This approach to transport planning is based on setting outcomes for a development based on achieving well-designed, sustainable and popular places, and providing the transport solutions to deliver those outcomes.



**7.1.6** Since 2012, the NPPF has had relatively minor amendments to Chapter 9 on promoting sustainable transport including new requirement to reference to Local Cycling and Walking plans. There are new policies for adequate lorry parking facilities and recognition of a national network of airfields, both of which affect potential allocations. Local Plan policies therefore remain consistent with national policy, in particular policies which align with national policy amendments to further promote sustainable travel.

**7.1.7** Local Plan policies as a whole also continue to manage patterns of development into sustainable locations; support mixed uses; safeguard future infrastructure routes; and retain a high bar for refusing development on road congestion grounds.

**7.1.8** In terms of changes outside of planning policy, the government has announced its intention to table a bill which extends bus franchising to all local authorities. This will make designing sustainable transport infrastructure significantly easier to co-ordinate and implement however the timescale for this is unknown. Hybrid, plug-in and electric vehicle adoption continues to grow as an attractive consumer choice with equivalent increasing pressure to grow the electric vehicle charging network. Automated vehicles are on the horizon and likely to emerge within the plan period up to 2041 however the effect of widespread use is unpredictable.

Bus and rail use collapsed during Covid-19 due to increased use of flexible working arrangements including working from home for 2 to 5 days a week and has recovered to around 90% of 2019 levels. This is growing again on an annual basis however patterns of use may have altered significantly. Motor vehicle use has likely returned to 2019 levels. The update to the Local Plan Highways Modelling will include an overall view on how peak time travel demand has been affected. These structural changes to commuter travel could also have negative effects on the demand/viability of rail station car-park provision.

## Local Plan Performance

**7.1.9** To support the allocation policies in the Local Plan Review, key evidence will need to be commissioned.

- Local Plan Highways Modelling is being updated
- Infrastructure Development Plan is being updated
- The Local Plan will need to incorporate Cycling Strategy 2021 and Braintree District cycling action plan 2018 Sustainability Appraisal

**7.1.10** ONS data reveals that around half of employed residents in Braintree District commute to work outside the district (as a comparison, Colchester City retains 70% of its employed residents). Further, the retail study demonstrates that leisure and shopping demand is congregating at fewer, larger regional locations. Significant tertiary education (Anglian Ruskin University and University of Essex) and secondary healthcare services (Broomfield and Colchester) are also based in either Chelmsford or Colchester. Therefore, the vision or visions for each development must contend with local issues, be compatible with resident's needs to access health, retail, employment and education services outside of the development and likely outside of the district.

**7.1.11** ONS data also shows that around 50% of the district's population lives within 30 minute walk of a railway station however 75% of journeys in Braintree district have continued to be undertaken by car and car ownership is high in the national and regional contexts. National statistics show that modal shares for rail and bus use has fallen in the wake of Covid-19 albeit new local evidence will be commissioned to show if there are lasting local effects. In this respect it would appear that the policies which promote sustainable travel are failing to achieve modal shift.

**7.1.12** The first steps towards developing a vision-led approach could require developing a shared understanding of the existing transport system, location of services and accessibility to those locations; it's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This should be undertaken in the context of the dynamics above and in consultation with community stakeholders.

### **Local Transport Plan (LPT4)**

**7.1.13** ECC has commenced the preparation of a new LTP4 for the period up to 2050 covering three strategic themes which are aligned to Everyone's Essex and DfT priorities:

- Supporting People, Health, Wellbeing, and Independence
- Creating Sustainable Places and Communities
- Connecting People, Places and Businesses



**7.1.14** ECC has and will continue to engage the Council on a regular basis with regards the preparation of LTP4 in order to embed its principles into the review.

**7.1.15** As well as LTP, ECC has other key policy documents which will need to be considered in preparing the review, including the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP); Development Management Policies; Sustainable Travel Planning; EV Charge Point

Strategy; Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs); the Transport Technology Strategy; and Network Management Plans and Maintenance Strategies.

## **New Transport Infrastructure Provision**

**7.1.16** The 2017 highways modelling identifies the junctions that would become overcapacity as a result of the development proposed in the Local Plan. In the main it is the operation of junctions where most of the issues arise; some link roads are over-capacity but generally result in an associated junction being over-capacity. The progress and funding of these projects are in table B.

**7.1.17** The Local Plan also identifies transport infrastructure projects within the Policy LPP 45 New Road Infrastructure. The progress and funding of these projects are in table 4.

**7.1.18** In Table 4 and Table 5 only two projects out of 24 have been completed. For some projects, planning permission is granted and funding secured however the development has not started and in some cases, there is no supporting development identified.

Project	Planning Permission	Funding	Construction Progress
A12 to A120 widening	Yes	Strategic - TBC	No
A120 (Braintree to A12 – new route)	No	Strategic - No	No
Millenium Way Slips Braintree	No	No	No
Halstead Bypass	No	Private	No
Cut Throat Lane Witham	No	Private	No
Springwood Drive Braintree	Yes	Yes (S.106)	No

**Table 4 Progress of allocated transport infrastructure projects**

### **A12 to A120 widening Development Consent Order (DCO) Update**

**7.1.19** This is a National Highways road investment project to widen the A12 from Boreham Interchange to Marks Tey, including redesigning several junctions within Braintree district which improves safety and meets modern design standards. The communities of Hatfield Peverel, Witham and Kelvedon/Feering would benefit from new all-directions junctions for improved access. The scheme will reduce congestion, reduce journey times and improves walking and cycling connectivity. A significant length of de-trunked A12 will provide additional local highway capacity in two stretches between Witham, Rivenhall End and Kelvedon; and north of Feering to Marks Tey.

**7.1.20** The Development Consent Order was granted permission in 2022 and is ready for work to start however following the change in government, all DFT spending is under review. This five-year settlement (April 2026 to March 2031) means that the DCO is on hold and the scheme will be delayed. It was due start in 2023-24 and open for traffic 4 years later in 2027-28.

### **A120 (Braintree To A12 – New Route)**

**7.1.21** ECC completed a route options public consultation and a favoured route option was recommended to government in 2018. This option included upgrades to Galleys Corner to a new junction on the A12 south of Kelvedon. National highways have taken over the project and have since not made any announcements. An announcement on the projects in RIS3 covering the period 2025-2030 is likely delayed until late 2025.

Junction Improvements identified in the Braintree Transport Assessment			
Project	Planning Permission	Funding	Construction Progress
Rye Mill Lane, Feering (subject to A12 mitigation)	Full application granted	Yes (S.106)	None
Feering Hill, Feering (subject to A12 mitigation)	Pre-application	No (S.106)	None
Panners Interchange, Great Notley (including modal shift measures)	Pre-application	No (S.106)	None
A131 - London Road, Great Notley	Pre-application	No (S.106)	None
Cuckoo Way, Great Notley	LDO granted	Yes (S.106) Horizon 120	Complete
Marks Farm/Broad Road, Braintree	Outline granted	Yes (S.106) Straits Mill	None
Panfield lane link, Braintree	Hybrid granted	Yes (S.106) NW Braintree, Panfield lane	None
Aetheric Road, Braintree (subject to ongoing study)	Full application granted	Yes (S.106) Rayne Road	Complete
Deanery Hill, Braintree	Unknown	No	None
Church Lane, Braintree	Unknown	No	None
Courtauld Road/Coggeshall Road, Braintree	Unknown	No	None
Cressing Road/Coggeshall Road, Braintree	Unknown	No	None
Chipping Hill, Witham	Full application granted	Yes (S.106) Forest Road	None
Rickstones Road, Witham	Unknown	No	None

Junction Improvements identified in the Braintree Transport Assessment			
Newland Street, Witham	Unknown	No	None
Maldon Road - The Street, Hatfield Peverel	Unknown	No	None
Head Street, Halstead	Unknown	No	None
A1124 - Church Hill, Earls Colne	Unknown	No	None

**Table 5 Junction improvements identified in the Braintree Transport Assessment/Infrastructure Development Plan**

## Revision Braintree Integrated Transport Package (ITP)

**7.1.22** This ITP was published in 2018 by ECC and includes a number of schemes which would require S.106 funding as well as a funding bid to SELEP:

- Springwood Drive Roundabout improvements
- Braintree Station Access improvements
- A120 Millennium Way slips (same as above)

**7.1.23** Some public consultation and preliminary design work has been undertaken however, none of these schemes have been completed.

## Sustainable Travel

### Braintree District Cycling Action Plan (CAP), Essex County Council 2018

**7.1.24** The action plan notes that Braintree, Witham and Halstead have limited cycle provision which can also be disconnected and infrequent. It was observed that Braintree has relatively low levels of commuter cycling but high levels of active leisure cycling. It identified an opportunity to reduce the number of short commuter journeys (less than 5km) being made by car by increasing the number of journeys by cycling.

**7.1.25** A series of recommendations include filling in obvious gaps in the existing cycle network, bringing in London inspired cycle superhighway branding, and improving access to Braintree and Witham rail stations.

**7.1.26** Two projects in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plan have been completed and are operational:

- Braintree Town Centre
- London Road, Great Notley



## Braintree and Witham Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

**7.1.27** A refreshed LCWIP is being prepared for the district to build upon the Cycling Action Plans to develop network plans for walking and cycling across the district connecting across

**7.1.28** administrative boundaries where feasible. This will enable ECC to prioritise investment decisions based upon future demand and the propensity to both walk and cycle. Potential LCWIP routes are being assessed using a Route Prioritisation Tool, which seeks to balance local need and value for money. These routes have not yet been subject to any route feasibility or design. A countywide LCWIP is also being prepared.



### Cycling Strategy, Braintree 2021

**7.1.29** The recently adopted cycling strategy recognises that cycling can be beneficial for professional and leisure cyclists, as well as a commuting tool. It supports the 2018 ECC Braintree District cycling action plan, and aims to develop a coherent and consistent cycle network within the towns and District.

**7.1.30** Essex is developing a new Essex Cycling Strategy. A public consultation on the draft strategy ran in the summer 2024.

### Great Eastern Mainline

**7.1.31** A new station at Beaulieu Park would also facilitate a passing loop and commuter access to the services to London without entering Chelmsford City Centre. The station, a bus interchange and carpark is under construction and is due to open in Winter 2025. This would be attractive destination for railheading for residents on the A131 corridor (as an alternative to Braintree Branchline).

**7.1.32** An extension to parking provision and cycle lock-up facilities was also proposed as part of Witham Station upgrades prior to the pandemic however these parts of the project have yet to be implemented.

### Braintree Branch Line

**7.1.33** There are no projects or proposals for the implementation of one or more passing loops on the Braintree Branch Line. An ambitious scheme could achieve a doubling of service frequency to 2 trains per hour at Braintree Station.

### Essex Bus Strategy

**7.1.34** The Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan aims to improve bus service quality, reliability and connectivity through infrastructure and policy measures. Nearly all of Braintree District is identified within a 'rural bus connectivity' area where bus service connectivity is worse than urban

areas. The strategy covers the whole of Essex and contains a wide range of incremental measures, however aside from DiGi Go and minor bus-stop improvements, there are limited infrastructure measures identified for Braintree District.

**7.1.35** The documents identifies the difficulties in obtaining Section 106 funding for Bus Improvements; including geographical limitations such as a strict focus on the immediate area of the development, a lack of clear central government guidance over what a developer's reasonable expectations of funding for bus services should be, the long build times for larger developments and viability concerns of some developers. This indicates that bus improvements schemes are reliant on being ECC led with heavy use of public sector grant funding.

## Policy Options In Neighbouring Areas

**7.1.36** The review of the Local Plan Transport Infrastructure objective is likely to reflect on the prioritisation of sustainable travel given in national policy. The review could also consider splitting transport policy between local journeys and out-commuters which have different needs and modes of travel; in this respect developments which are well linked to jobs at Braintree, Witham and Halstead could focus on local journeys and development which requires out-commuting would need to take into account the policies, schemes and vision of neighbouring authorities which would affect longer journeys.

**7.1.37** It would nevertheless be important for the Local Plan to take into account of, and work in-sync with, policy initiatives in neighbouring authorities which are destinations for Braintree residents.

### Chelmsford

- Prioritising active travel and sustainable transport
- Increasing provision for infrastructure to support active travel and the use of sustainable modes of transport
- Supporting the market transition to hybrid and electric vehicles.
- Supporting the provision of strategic and local transport infrastructure schemes.
- Promoting innovations in sustainable travel, including using smart technology.

### Colchester

- Improvements A12 junctions 25 and 26 (including A133/A134 Colne Bank Roundabout)
- Improvements to southern distributor road network
- Improvements to bus services and routes
- Improvements to walking and cycling network.



## Broadband

### Current Objective:

“To work with Essex County Council and service providers, to secure the earliest availability of universal broadband coverage and the fastest available connections speeds in the District, and to ensure that these are made available to all new developments, along with measures to futureproof development for additional technologies.”

**7.2.1** Chapter 10 of the NPPF requires planning to support the development and enhancement of electronic communications networks, including next-generation mobile technologies (5G) and full-fibre broadband. Local Plans should set out the approach for delivering and upgrading high-quality digital infrastructure over time.

**7.2.2** The availability of mobile (5G) and broadband infrastructure, particularly in rural areas remains a key factor for ensuring residents can access services, work from home and reduce the need to travel. Local Plan policies require the provision of full fibre to the premises for new employment and for developments of 30 or more dwellings. For smaller developments, either the same standard or additional ducting for future proofing is required.

**7.2.3** Upon review, it is considered that technologies supported by this policy continue to remain relevant; 5G broadband is actively being rolled out and fibre to the premises is the most reliable and cost-effective form of broadband. In some rural areas, near orbit satellite services and 5G may now be available however the low-latency, speed (capacity in mb/s), reliability and support for bringing choice and competition means that full fibre remains a long-term ambition for the Council. Although the need for policy support diminishes in better connected urban areas, the broadband policy seems to function effectively.

**7.2.4** The NPPF's focus on the development management of telecommunications mast installations (5G) will continue to be in use alongside the Local Plan policy.

# Good Quality Design

## Good Quality Design

Current Objective:

“All new developments in the District will be of high-quality design, easily maintainable and will respect the scale, style and setting of the site with reference to historic townscapes, natural landscapes and existing infrastructure. Development should use materials which respect and enhance their setting and contribute to local character.”

**8.1.1** Where people live has a major effect on their life. If resident's living environment is well-planned, appropriately designed and effectively managed, their environmental quality of life is more likely to be of a good standard. This chapter looks at the link between planning and design to help produce improved living environments which results in a better quality of life for all. The objective is to encourage and assist those involved in the planning of new developments to think more imaginatively about the best possible design and layout.

**8.1.2** In general, an effective approach to planning, design and development is one which;

- Makes efficient use of the available land and buildings and reduces the demand for green field development
- Provides homes which are attractive and environmentally friendly
- Encourages well laid out urban areas with good quality buildings, safe well-designed streets and good quality public open spaces
- Allows people to get to work easily and to the services they need like local shops and health and leisure facilities
- Makes good public transport viable and makes walking and cycling attractive options



**8.1.3** The Essex Design Guide has been a useful starting point for a development providing guidance on things like amenity standards and layouts amongst other things. Braintree District Council is currently working on its own Design Guide SPD.

**8.1.4** The Council has several policies on design within the Local Plan which covers the built and historic environment, and looks at things like creating inclusive environments, layout and design of development, conservation areas, heritage assets like listed buildings, and archaeology.

## The Historic Environment

**8.1.5** The Braintree District has a rich and varied historic environment with many attractive buildings, including arts and crafts style, the modern village at Silver End, historic buildings dating back hundreds of years, as well as numerous archaeological sites.

**8.1.6** The main towns have historic cores which provide further local distinctiveness and contribute to the overall character of the area. There are 39 conservation areas, and hundreds of listed buildings as well as historic parks and gardens, and archaeological sites. One of the main principles in the NPPF is that planning should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay, or other threats. This is further expanded on at paragraph 203 in the NPPF.



**8.1.7** Currently 6 heritage assets are included on the Heritage at Risk register produced by Historic England. These include conservation areas at Sible Hedingham and Silver End, 3 listed buildings including Castle Hedingham and some crop marks near Bures Hamlet.

**8.1.8** Heritage Assets are an irreplaceable resource which should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significant, which takes into account the wider economic, social and environmental benefits that the historic environment brings.

Heritage Assets are an important part of the character of the district, and it is important that designated and undesignated assets are recognised and protected where possible by development proposals.

**8.1.9** The Council needs to consider if the current policies contained in the Local Plan continue to be appropriate to meet the requirements of the NPPF, whilst at the same time enabling sufficient growth to meet other targets contained within the plan.

**8.1.10** The current policies in the Local Plan are considered to be largely appropriate once they have been update to reflect changes contained within the NPPF and NPPG.

# Creating Better Places

## Healthy Communities

Current Objective:

“All residents of the District are able to keep active and make healthy choices by ensuring outdoor community areas are preserved and enhanced and appropriate new areas to enable sports and recreation are created. Cycle ways and pedestrian links are also to be provided in all new developments to encourage walking and cycling. Land will be made available to support the expansion of local physical and mental health facilities to support new and growing communities.”

**9.1.1** The NPPF seeks to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs, through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

**9.1.2** The adopted Local Plan includes policies like Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessments, provision for Open Space, Sport and Recreation to help address that requirement. The Local Plan also includes policies on creating High Quality Spaces which includes seeking a high standard of public realm and landscape features, as well as standards for the provision of open space.

**9.1.3** The NPPF is broadly similar to previous versions of the NPPF and the Local Plan is likely to need minimal changes other than to update standards and reference text from an NPPF perspective.

**9.1.4** The Council has produced several complementary documents on health issues such as its Livewell Strategy (2024-28), which has its own set vision, in which we have a district where people are living more active and connected lives, children grow up to meet their full potential, residents can enjoy life into old age, and communities.





## Social Infrastructure

Current Objective:

“Residents of the District should have access to the best local and community facilities which provide inclusive places for communities to meet, play and learn. New developments will make contributions to existing facilities or provide land and contributions for new facilities”.

**9.2.1** Paragraph 20 of the NPPF states that strategic policies should make sufficient provision for community facilities such as health, education and cultural facilities. In addition, paragraph 88 of the NPPF makes it clear that planning policies and decisions should enable the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship. Paragraph 98 further states that to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

*"plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments."*

As such there is strong support in the NPPF for the provision and retention of community facilities though the Local Plan process.

**9.2.2** The provision of social infrastructure is present throughout the Local Plan, with strategic policies seeking on site provision for things like community facilities, NHS provision and open space. Policy LPP61 – Local Community Services and Facilities identified sites for community woodland at Temple Lane Silver End, and Mollys Wood, Sible Hedingham. This policy also seeks to protect community facilities from changes of use unless specific circumstances apply. Sites for new community facilities at Butler Road Halstead, Nuns Walk and Hunnable Industrial Estate Great Yeldham are also shown. Cemeteries and churchyards are also protected under a separate policy, which also allocates an extension to Bocking Cemetery and to the church yard at St Mary The Virgin, Great Bardfield.

**9.2.3** Open Space, sport and recreation are also important community facilities and play a vital role in providing health and leisure opportunities for residents in the district. The Council is currently updating its evidence base for the provision of open space, built facilities and playing pitch strategies, as well as its community facilities study. The adopted Local Plan seeks to avoid losing open spaces unless a robust and up to date assessment has been undertaken which demonstrates that they are surplus to requirement.

## Education and Skills

Current Objective:

“To facilitate the best possible education system for District residents of all ages, by supporting the construction of new schools and other educational buildings which support life-long learning and development in the District, providing the skills necessary for businesses to thrive.”

**9.3.1** National policy for infrastructure provision states that Local Plans should set out the contributions expected from development. Amendments to the National Planning Policy supports development for new Early Years and childcare (EYCC), new free schools and Post-16 proposals as well as primary and secondary schools, and places significant weight on the importance of all new public infrastructure. There have also been some changes to the taxation of private education. Other than the above, national policy has not substantially changed in regards to education and skills, and has not disrupted the local education authority's predict and provide model currently being used in Braintree district.

## Protection of Education Land

**9.3.2** In the Local Plan, delivery of new education facilities is sought at the main towns, key service villages and strategic growth locations to co-locate service provision across multiple types of infrastructure. Policy LPP60 Education Establishments seeks to protect sites for educational use and seeks to resist changes to those sites. If a site is generally redundant, alternative provision is being provided, or an area of a site is in excess of what is required for playing field provision (taking into account projected need), alternative uses may be considered.

## Generation Of Education Need

**9.3.3** New developments will be expected to contribute to primary and secondary education, early years and childcare and nursery provision where appropriate. Essex County Council applies a consistent approach when it comes to what a site should be providing for educational needs. Braintree District Council negotiates S.106s with developers to ensure delivery of new facilities is secured to arrive in a timely manner.

**9.3.4** Demand forecasting for houses assumes the generation of 0.3 pupils for primary education and 0.2 pupils for secondary education per new dwelling irrespective of size. For flats this is 0.15 and 0.1 respectively. The provision sought would either be through financial contributions and/or provision of land allocated for the specific purpose of school provision depending on the development.

**9.3.5** For the provision of primary education, the district is divided into one of eight school planning units and for secondary schools, the district is divided into three. The County Council regularly updates a 10-year plan *meeting the demand for school places* which forecasts the number of pupils that will be on school rolls in future years and identifies a project pipeline for new schools or an expansion of an existing school. The current plan identifies the following:

- New Primary school at Lodge Farm
- ½ form entry expansion of St. Peters CE
- Small expansion of Feering CE
- New Primary school at Panfield Lane
- 2 FE expansion at New Rickstones Academy

**9.3.6** This 10-year plan, along with the IDP and the viability study will be updated during the Local Plan Review to ensure that new school places are provided in a timely manner.



## Local Plan Performance

**9.3.7** One site is allocated in the Local Plan for a new primary school at land at Ravens Avenue, Halstead. This site has remained vacant however its capacity and location will be considered in the Local Plan Review.

**9.3.8** Negotiations for the strategic growth location at Feering is on-going and could result in the funding of an expansion of the Feering Primary or the provision of new school. New EYCC and nursery schools will be provided onsite as part of the development and, if possible, co-located with primary schools.

**9.3.9** The formulation of the district's school planning units means that development in some villages, for example Silver End has led to the construction of additional capacity at Cressing Tye Green. A similar approach has been taken for growth at Hatfield Peverel. Unfortunately, this results in primary age pupils having to travel more than 800m away undermining sustainable travel objectives. Developments which are more than two miles away from primary or secondary schools results in an statutory on-going requirement for the provision of a school bus.

**9.3.10** Therefore, sufficiently large development (700 to 1,400 dwellings) which provides critical mass for support a new school of at least 1FE (although 2FE is preferred) should be viewed favourably from an education infrastructure perspective. Sites of 4,500 dwellings are required to support the provision of a new secondary school. However the location of existing education facilities with capacity or land to expand, particularly secondary education, is likely to have a guiding influence on the location of allocations in the Local Plan Review.

**9.3.11** No new secondary schools were proposed through the existing Local Plan due to the lack of a single Strategic Growth Location with sufficient quantum of growth to warrant such provision. The IDP identified need for the provision of a new secondary school in the Braintree Town area to accommodate educational need for growth at Braintree and Great Leighs. The Local Plan Review will likely need to address this forecasted shortfall.

**9.3.12** It is likely that the Local Plan will be required to provide further on-site education provision in line with future housing provision, with a key issue of secondary education provision needing to be addressed.



# The Natural Environment

## Climate Change and Protection of the Environment

Current Objective:

“To protect and enhance the natural and historic environment and varied landscape character of the District, promoting local distinctiveness and character. Development will be planned with high quality green infrastructure and space for flora and fauna, with no net loss of biodiversity. The Council will seek to minimise the impact of all forms of pollution on the health and amenity of local communities and the natural and built environment.”

### Green Infrastructure

**10.1.1** Green Infrastructure is described in the plan as “a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which can deliver a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green Infrastructure includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments and private gardens.”

**10.1.2** The NPPF states that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places (to ensure outcomes support beauty and placemaking), and make sufficient provision for green infrastructure. It refers to the role of safe and accessible Green Infrastructure in supporting healthy lifestyles, in managing the risks of climate change and its role in mitigating the impacts of poor air quality. It refers to the need to plan at a strategic scale for maintaining and enhancing such networks landscape/catchment scale

**10.1.3** Green Infrastructure is made up of a range of different land uses with differing primary purposes, (e.g. recreation, food production, biodiversity, open spaces) but which together make up a network of spaces which can have multiple benefits. Different elements of Green Infrastructure are dealt with in the plan according to their function and new development is required to provide green infrastructure of a high standard. Existing Local Plan policies seek to protect sites protected for habitat or wildlife importance, however Green infrastructure seeks to also consider those areas which are not designated and together support the creation of networks which are bigger, better quality and more connected. Public access is important, and a network of public footpaths and bridleways exist which encourages recreation, taking pressure off the more sensitive areas at the coast, and support wellbeing. Improving such networks of public access is supported where appropriate. Green Infrastructure provision is also important in urban areas, where landscaping features such as open grass or shrubs, individual or groups of trees, parks, gardens, playing fields, open space, SuDs, green roofs, allotments and water features such as streams, rivers and ponds can contribute to wellbeing and support wildlife. New or improved connections between development sites and urban and rural surroundings will be sought.

**10.1.4** The district contains several SSSIs and the implications of new development, particularly where public access is an issue might be weighed against their condition and conservation objectives.

**10.1.5** Since the Plan was examined, the requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been introduced and the Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy subject to public consultation. The implications of these for plan policies will need to be considered.

**10.1.6** Natural England mapping of priority areas is now publicly available, and these areas should be recognised as part of the ecological and green infrastructure network. Mapping of these areas together with Local Nature Recovery strategic habitats and opportunity sites would give a better understanding of the district's ecological network.

## Biodiversity

**10.1.7** The Council is required by the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance to protect and enhance sites of biodiversity or geological value, soils and individual species appropriately and commensurate with their statutory or Local Plan status and in accordance with Natural England advice. The mitigation hierarchy must be applied, requiring that biodiversity is protected and if this is not possible any harms are mitigated on site. If this is not possible off site mitigation must be provided, or the proposals refused.

**10.1.8** The Environment Act has introduced a mandatory and measurable BNG of at least 10% to be provided in addition to application of the existing mitigation hierarchy. The plan must be altered to refer to the new BNG requirement and how this is to be achieved. Government guidance seeks on site provision in the first instance. There are sites within the district offering BNG credits if off site provision is not possible and these should be referred to in the Plan. The Council seeks to encourage and support creation of green and blue (water related) ecological networks which are bigger, better quality and better connected and by working with authorities and bodies within and outside the district to facilitate a landscape scale approach as now encouraged by government.

**10.1.9** The Environment Act mandated the creation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) and a draft version of the Essex LNRS has undergone public consultation and is expected to be published in spring 2025. This plan identifies strategic ecological networks and strategic ecological habitats within which BNG, and other provision would have the most impact. Advice is expected from the government by the end of the year further clarifying the relationship between Local Plans and local nature recovery strategy. The Local Plan may need further alteration following this advice however in the meantime, plans are obliged to have regard to its contents.

**10.1.10** Parts of the district lie within the zone of influence where new development is considered to add to recreational pressure on the Essex coastal wildlife sites of European importance. Within this area funds are sought from developers to mitigate such impacts, and it is not anticipated that further changes would be required.

**10.1.11** Where appropriate the plan should refer to projects being undertaken to improve habitat and biodiversity as appropriate.

**10.1.12** Local Plan mapping should be updated to reflect changes to the existing network of wildlife sites and add Local Nature Recovery strategic networks and opportunity sites when appropriate.

## External Lighting

**10.1.13** Planning Practice Guidance on lighting was updated in 2019 and includes more detail on how lighting should be considered in relation to its surroundings.

**10.1.14** There is more explicit recognition that lighting systems can be obtrusive and a form of pollution. Hence the need to ensure a development lighting scheme is appropriate within surroundings which could include existing light pollution problems, the presence of sensitive uses nearby such as hospitals, astronomy uses, habitat for nocturnal creatures, designated dark skies and intrinsically dark skies etc. Mitigation may be possible where a use may have adverse impacts on neighbouring uses and “the key is getting the right light, in the right place and providing light at the right time”.



**10.1.15** Updated advice gives detail on aspects of lighting and its impacts, such as considering when or where light shines, how much it shines and possible ecological impacts. More detail was given mentioning how lighting can impact ecology such as the type of light used, proximity to protected sites/species or where they feed, especially water areas or other reflective surfaces.

**10.1.16** The updated advice mentions that that some types of premises are exempt from the statutory nuisance regime for artificial light e.g. prisons, transport depots airports therefore it is particularly important that lighting design for these uses are considered early in the process

## The Water Environment

**10.1.17** The Council, and other public bodies have a legal duty to take the Water Framework Directive (this has changed) into account when decision making. This seeks to achieve 'good ecological status and prevent deterioration in water quality. Environment Agency River Basin Plans set out what is required to achieve this goal but was updated in 2022. The Local plan text should be altered to refer to the latest plan and ensure that it remains in alignment. The plan should clarify that the plan relates to areas which are outside the scope of the local plan but that the provision of appropriate water infrastructure for drinking water and wastewater disposal and to control flood risk is necessary to prevent deterioration of “surface waters”. The plan should refer to projects seeking to improve water quality within the district as appropriate for example work being undertaken to reduced Storm water overflows; a requirement for Water companies introduced by the Environment Act.

**10.1.18** To achieve the above goals, the Council must be advised by other organisations involved in this area particularly the Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority (Essex County Council) who oversee Flood risk Water Directive compliance, water quality issues, and Surface Water Management respectively. The Water Companies, in this case, Anglian Water and Essex and Suffolk Water, have a duty to plan for water supply and disposal, drought planning.

**10.1.19** Water quality can be harmed where surface water drains to combined sewers during downpours and hence quickly to rivers and streams sometimes overloading storm drains. The Environment Agency encourages natural drainage within developments which involves water draining directly into the ground through permeable surfaces and undeveloped areas such as gardens. This slows the rate at which water reaches watercourses as well as being better for water quality. These techniques, known as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), are mandatory.

## Landscape

**10.1.20** The NPPF and government guidance requires local authorities to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and in accordance with their protected designations, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and seek to minimise the impacts of new development.

**10.1.21** To understand the Braintree landscape and inform decisions, a district wide landscape character assessment was published in 2006 as well as a set of more detailed settlement edge assessments in 2015. Some settlement edges have altered during the intervening period and new studies have been commissioned. The plan should be altered to refer to this updated evidence base to ensure that development fits appropriately into the landscape or avoids sensitive locations.

**10.1.22** The Landscapes Review in 2019 published Jan 2022 by the government should be referenced in the plan text as appropriate as should the Essex Wildlife Trust “Living landscapes” document.

**10.1.23** The eastern extremity of the district includes the proposed extension to the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), known as the Stour River Valley Project Area. AONBs are now referred to as National Landscapes. The local plan covers an area of setting for the designated National Landscapes (AONB) and Policy LPP67 recognises that this area has not yet been designated.

**10.1.24** The Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Stour Valley Project Area Management Plan is a statutory plan for the area. It is the principal vehicle for ensuring that the statutory purposes of the AONB are met, and is a material consideration in the planning process. This plan was updated in December 2023 and refers to the area proposed for extension as the Stour Valley Project Area. The Plan sets out that this area represents a Valued Landscape. The issues included in the Management Plan should be considered as part of the review.

**10.1.25** In December 2023, the Countryside and Right of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) required ‘relevant authorities’, in exercising or performing any function that affect AONBs in England, to “seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.” This is a statutory duty which strengthens protections for the area

and is relevant when considering the setting for the designation. The concept of natural beauty also includes consideration of the elements such as settlement, landform, ecological features, tranquillity, dark skies etc.

**10.1.26** The National Landscapes Association in their briefing document has advised that local authorities consider how the Management affects Local Plan Vision, development strategy, how development need can be achieved without harming the natural beauty of the National Landscapes (AONB), the extent to which all policies would align with the objectives/principles/policies of the Management Plan and help deliver its outcomes. It advises that authorities should also consider if current policies are sufficient to comply with the strengthened requirements and consider amending policies if necessary.

## Green Buffers

**10.1.27** The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

*187 b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.*

*135 c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*

**10.1.28** SP3 of the adopted Local Plan Part 1 requires future growth to be planned to ensure existing settlements maintain their distinctive character and role, to avoid coalescence between them and to conserve their setting. The reference to coalescence was inserted as MM7 in the Inspector's Schedule of Recommended Main Modifications.

**10.1.29** The NPPF has been updated since the policy was written however the policy justification and wording for this policy remains and no alterations are proposed. The policy applies to a named list of designated sites shown on Inset Maps and consideration should be given as to whether minor adjustments to the boundaries are needed or whether new ones could be justified.



## Sustainability

Current Objective:

“To ensure that all development takes place in the most well-connected areas, making the best use of sites that have been previously developed. The use of natural resources should be minimised, and developments should encourage the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency measures.”

**10.2.1** The Climate Change Act 2008 requires the UK to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% compared with 1990 levels by 2050 and this target was increased to 100% in 2019.

**10.2.2** The need to address climate change has gained urgency in recent years and further review of the plan policies is essential to support delivery of the government's targets on adaption and mitigation.

**10.2.3** The Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to include in its plan, policies designed to ensure that the development of land contributes to the mitigation of, and adaptation to climate change. The local plan is required to deliver sustainable development in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework guidance through proactive strategies

**10.2.4** The adopted plan includes a range of policies across its various subject areas which address climate change and the need to transition to a low carbon economy. Such policies include those that relate to locating homes near services and facilities, constructing homes to the lower building control standard of 110 litre water per person per day, provision of broadband facilities, charging points for new development and renewable energy generation.

**10.2.5** One of the main issues informing Local Plan policy is how far policies can require higher energy performance standards than those set out in Building Regulations. The ability of Local Authorities to set a net zero standards remains unclear at present

### The Braintree District

**10.2.6** Braintree District Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019 with an aim to make the Council functions and decision making aligned to the shift to carbon neutral in 2030. The Action Plan was adopted in September 2021.

### Essex County Council

**10.2.7** In July 2021, the Essex Climate Commission published the Commission's recommendations in “Net Zero: Making Essex Carbon Neutral” followed in November by Essex County Council's Climate Action Plan supporting the Commission's recommendations in November 2021. In January 2022 Essex County launched its environmental stewardship Climate Focus Area (FCA) with the intention of stewarding sustainable land stewardship technologies and systems and 68.69% of Braintree district's land is included in this area.

**10.2.8** Essex County Council has commissioned legal opinion on the ability of local planning authorities to set local plan policies that require development to achieve energy efficiency standards above Building Regulations, together with evidence support the development of 'net zero' planning policies in local plans in Essex.

## **Protecting And Enhancing Natural Resources, Minimising Pollution And Safeguarding From Hazards**

**10.2.9** Many of the goals set out by this policy have been strengthened since the plan was examined, particularly as set out in the Government's A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to improve the Environment 2018, its successor the Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 and the Environment Act (and secondary legislation). While the areas to be protected as mentioned in the policy have remained the same, the advice underlying how they have applied have been updated.

**10.2.10** Guidance has been issued on how to protect soils during construction and the policy should be updated to refer to this guidance.

**10.2.11** Soils on agricultural land are an important resource and it's maintaining its quality should be a considered where development involves its reuse or relocation etc. Advice on how this might be achieved is outlined in government advice as mentioned above.

## **Climate Change**

**10.2.12** LPP71 focuses on climate change and the need to mitigate and adapt to it as required by the NPPF, while the accompanying text sets out the background and ways in which this could be achieved. This policy expects applicants to demonstrate that measures to lower carbon emissions, increase renewable energy provision and adapt to the expected impacts of climate change have been incorporated into their schemes by submitting a Sustainability Statement. The background information needs to be brought up to date with recent developments including some details of Braintree district's carbon emissions and reference to the government's climate change policies.

**10.2.13** The need to respond to climate change has increased in urgency over the past few years and the challenge is to ensure that new development contributes as little to total carbon emissions as possible. This will mean making the best use of resources to minimise the use of resources such as energy and water, to mitigate and adapt to climate change and manage unavoidable risks.

**10.2.14** New development should be planned for in ways which avoids increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change and this should be reflected in the policy text.

**10.2.15** The Essex Climate Commission considers that the most important contribution to minimising energy requirements lies with a high build quality, and ideally based on one of the Passivhaus standards. Build quality is controlled through the building regulations and although the government have introduced a new building control standard – "The Future Homes Standard", to



commence during 2025, the Essex Climate Commission are concerned that this standard is not sufficiently strict and that more can be done, such as requiring one of the Passivhaus standards and addressing embodied and operational carbon.

**10.2.16** LPP71 also refers to the need for renewable and low carbon energy however Policy LPP73 covers this area therefore this element is repetition and should be removed.

**10.2.17** Historic England have recently issued a number of Advice Notes aimed at improving on adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency. They are working with climate specialists to understand the implications for heritage of future climate projections in order to spread knowledge as well as mapping hazards. The plan should be updated to support efforts to safeguard heritage into the future.

## Soils And Agricultural Land

**10.2.18** The plan should safeguard the long term capability of best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a in the Agricultural Land Classification) as a resource for the future in line with National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 187.

**10.2.19** A very high proportion of the agricultural land within Braintree district falls within the category of best and most versatile (BMV) although this will place a constraint on the location and scale of growth options it is acknowledged that it will not be possible to locate all development on lower grade land. The Plan should seek to avoid allocations on BMV land as far as possible though Plan policies should ensure that detailed plans steer development towards areas of poorer quality subject to other local plan considerations.



**10.2.20** Pressure for change of use of agricultural land has intensified since the plan was examined, and countrywide use of land for agriculture has fallen. Pressure has come development pressure, from new funding arrangements favouring management of land for nature, introduction of biodiversity net gain and the speeding up of renewable energy generation – mainly solar power generation within the district. The government seeks to speed up renewable energy provision and is considering its implementation of the 30X30 target which seeks 30% of land managed for nature therefore these pressures will continue. The pressures have been recognised by the Council in a motion which seeks to recognise the contribution of agriculture to the economy.

**10.2.21** The 2023 Local Plan does not refer to the DEFRA Code of practice for the sustainable use of soils on construction sites which recognises soil as an important resource and seeks to safeguard it during development.

## **Resource Efficiency, Energy Generation And Energy Efficiency**

**10.2.22** Policy LPP72 requires a building control standard of 110 litres per person per day water efficiency standard. Further reduction in water efficiency may be technically possible but could require installation of grey water reuse as standard. It is not yet clear if this would be feasible deliverable. If it were likely the water companies and environment agency were to roll out such a standard within the lifetime of the plan it might be appropriate to include support within the plan.

**10.2.23** This policy refers to the need to provide a 19% improvement in energy performance over the requirements of the Building Regulations (2013). The introduction of the Future Homes Standard interim standard exceeds this performance requirement and will be further improved in 2025. As such this part of the policy is redundant and should be removed. Nevertheless, references to BREEAM should remain.

**10.2.24** The urgency to improve energy efficiency has increased in recent years and technology and standards keep developing, particularly with regard to that which can be incorporated into residential and other buildings. A new Building Regulations standard, The Future Homes Standard will improve energy efficiency, but the Essex Climate Commission consider that this standard is not strict enough. The ability of planning policy to require provision over and above the building regulations subject to uncertainty at present and will be subject to legal interpretation but may be resolved within the plan preparation period. If it becomes clear that planning authorities can require energy efficiency and generation standards greater than the Building Regulations then the possibilities which this offers, should be explored

## **Renewable Energy Schemes**

**10.2.25** The NPPF and planning Practice Guidance seek a positive strategy which not only seeks to maximise the potential for renewable energy but unlike the 2012 NPPF also promotes their future re-powering and life extension. The policy should be reworded to reflect this new guidance.



**10.2.26** The urgency to increase the capacity of renewable energy within the country has increased in recent years and technology and standards keep developing, particularly with regard to that which can be incorporated into residential and other buildings (e.g. heat pumps and solar panels). Such technologies fall under Building Regulations as well as Planning. The ability of planning policy to require provision over and above the building regulations subject to uncertainty at

present and will be subject to legal interpretation but may be resolved within the plan preparation period. If it becomes clear that planning authorities can require energy efficiency and generation standards greater than the Building Regulations then the possibilities which this offers, should be explored. Such possibilities could include setting standards on embodied carbon and on site energy generation. The Authority would also consider the viability of providing such energy generation as only proposals which are viable, and deliverable can be required by planning policies.

**10.2.27** Renewable energy generation on residential properties is being increasingly encouraged by government and installed by individuals, sometimes without needing permission, however where permission is needed criteria by which such installations should be assessed should be included in this policy. These might include consideration such as impacts on the amenities of neighbours, location, visual impacts and noise considerations.

**10.2.28** The NPPF and guidance advises that authorities should consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources which maximises the potential for suitable development, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development. Nevertheless proposal should not be located on unsuitable sites where they have harmful impacts including on residential amenity particularly through noise, the landscape and local amenity, habitat/biodiversity value. The supporting text to policy LPP 71 cites that development plan guidance would be produced “which will include guidance on location and design of such proposals to minimise such impacts” and that “This may include a review of the district in relation to finding suitable areas for wind related development”. Work on this Evidence base would be needed to establish a method for choosing suitable areas and justification site chosen.

## Battery Energy Storage Systems

**10.2.29** Planning Practice Guidance has introduced guidance on Battery Energy Storage Systems and these are closely associated with renewable energy generation, particularly solar farms. This advice was not included in the 2012 NPPF or PPG. This gives advice on the potential risks of such systems and how this should be considered. Authorities are advised to consult the Fire Service

over siting and location, prevention of the impacts of thermal runaway and access for the fire service. Applicants are encouraged to consider guidance produced by the National Fire Chief's Council when preparing applications.

**10.2.30** Battery installations must also be of acceptable visual appearance and have an acceptable impact on the landscape. The location in relation to residential and other properties must be considered following careful consideration of advice from the Fire Service.

## **Best Use Of Natural Resources**

### **Water provision, disposal and flood risk**

**10.2.31** The NPPF requires sustainable development to:

- avoid exposing people and property to flood risk from all sources and minimise flood risk where avoidance is not possible, ensuring resilience
- ensure sufficient potable water to support Local Plan growth
- ensure waste water disposal capacity to service growth.

**10.2.32** The NPPF has been revised since the Local Plan was examined, particularly with regard to flood risk, and although the plan is broadly still in alignment it should be adjusted where appropriate to reflect government advice. The adopted local plan was examined while the hydraulic models which inform flood risk areas around rivers are calculated. Any references to this situation should be removed from text as these updates were completed.

**10.2.33** Flood risk remains a risk in certain areas particularly in relation to climate change where it is expected to increase. In general, the favoured approach is to encourage designs which allow natural drainage to occur. Essex County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority issue advice on Surface Water Drainage in their Sustainable Drainage Systems Design Guide. Again, this has been updated since the plan was examined and the plan should be adjusted where necessary to remain in alignment.

**10.2.34** Flood risk impacts can be exacerbated where flood water results in pollution reaching rivers and groundwater, particularly where an aquifer may be affected. This situation is referred to in the background text but policies should be re-examined to consider if they should be made stronger.

**10.2.35** New government guidance emphasises the need for resilience to flood events and the plan should be re-examined to assess whether it should be strengthened.

**10.2.36** The scarcity of water means that water resources should be managed more carefully to ensure sufficient supplies of potable water and treatment facilities are available. This must be managed while ensuring water quality in the environment is maintained or improved and flood risk is improved or not made worse. This is a challenge and there are many bodies who have responsibilities in this area who work together in these objectives.

**10.2.37** The Water Companies have recently completed a new round of plans for providing water supply and wastewater disposal. These reflect that the district lies in an area of water stress and the companies have been required to extract less water from the environment. Whilst infrastructure is being developed to deal with these pressures it will not be operational for some time and there is an emphasis on using water by efficiently. The plan should be updated to reflect the present background and to more explicitly encourage measures to collect rain and reuse water. The water companies have already indicated that sufficient supplies of potable water will be available to serve growth in the current plan period and have been consulted on period covered by the review. It will be likely that water stress will continue feature into the future, and the Council should consider if it is appropriate to alter policies to encourage further water reduction.

**10.2.38** Since the Local Plan was adopted, Essex County Council have issued a Water Strategy for Essex which seeks to improve water quality and make the best use of resources and Environment Agency have updated the Anglian River Basin Management Plan and other advice. The plan should be reviewed to consider how these plans are reflected in Local Plan Policies.

**10.2.39** The use of Surface Water Drainage mechanism has become a standard means of providing drainage for new development within the district. There are areas where such methods are either inadvisable or need to be applied with care. These would include the areas shown in the Surface Water Management Plan as being critical drainage areas and where the advice outlined in the plan should be followed. This plan has been updated since the plan was examined, and the plan should be updated to remain in alignment.



# Empowering Local People

## Empowering Local People

Current Objective:

“Creating a planning environment in which local residents and businesses feel fully involved and empowered to engage in shaping the future of the District. Documents are written in a way which is accessible, and decisions are taken in a transparent way.”

**11.1.1** Our strategy for engaging with local communities is contained within our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Preparing a Statement of Community Involvement is a requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning Act 2008, the Localism Act 2011 and the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017). It must be completed in line with Section 18 of the 2004 Act. The National Planning Practice Guidance requires Local Planning Authorities to review their SCI to ensure effective community involvement at all stages of the planning process. Local Planning Authorities are normally required to update their Statement of Community Involvement every 5 years. The last version of the SCI was approved in 2021.

**11.1.2** The SCI also covers consultation arrangements around planning applications. It is considered appropriate to revise the SCI throughout the Local Plan Review if needed. As such the contents of the SCI will be kept under review.



## Next Steps

- We will analyse and consider all your responses, using them to inform the next stage of the review of the Local Plan and refined policies.
- A feedback report summarising the main issues raised in the consultation responses will be published on our website.
- The next stage will be the Preferred Options, where you'll have further opportunity to comment on the updated and new policies and the proposed sites where new homes, jobs and other facilities could be located. This consultation is expected to take place later in October/November 2025.
- There will also be further consultation and engagement on the later stages.
- Comments received to this consultation will be published on the Council's consultation portal in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The comments, together with evidence base studies, will inform the preparation of the next stage of the review of the adopted Local Plan.
- Consultation: <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanengagement>



# Glossary

Initials	What they stand for
5G	Fifth generation of mobile network technology
AMR	Annual Monitoring Report
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BDC	Braintree District Council
BRE	Building Research Establishment
BMV	Best and Most Versatile (agricultural land classification)
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
BSIP	Bus Service Improvement Plan
CHP	Combined Heat and Power
CDA	Critical Drainage Area
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
CIRIA	CIRIA is a member-based UK research and information organisation dedicated to improvement in all aspects of the construction industry
DART	Demand-Responsive Transport
DCO	Development Consent Order
DPD	Development Plan Document
Dws	Dwellings
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
EA	Environment Agency
ECC	Essex County Council
EIA	Equalities Impact Assessment
ELR	Employment Land Review
FTTP	Fibre to the Premises (broadband)
Ha	Hectare
HCA	Homes and Community Agency
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
KSV	Key Service Villages
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LDF	Local Development Framework
LLFA	Lead Local Flood Authority
LFRZs	Local Flood Risk Zones

Initials	What they stand for
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
LTP	Local Transport Plan
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
NGA	Next Generation Access
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
OAHN	Objective Assessment of Housing Need
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PCT	Mid-Essex Primary Care Trust
SANG	Sustainable Accessible Natural Greenspace
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SA/SEA	Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment
SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SAB	SUDS Approval Body
SuDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
SWMP	Surface Water Management Plan

