

Great Bardfield Neighbourhood Plan

Parish Council's Response to Examiner's Questions

August 2026

The Neighbourhood Plan Examiner issued a Procedural Matters and Questions document on 28 July 2026. In it, several questions were asked of the Parish Council.

This document represents Great Bardfield Parish Council's response to those questions. In addition, since the Examiner's Questions were issued, the Government has published a new National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026). Paragraph 6 of Annex A - Implementation states:

"Neighbourhood plans that have been submitted to the local planning authority under Regulation 15, on or before, the date of publication of this Framework [17 August 2026] should be prepared in accordance with the Framework published in December 2024. Any neighbourhood plans that have not been submitted must comply with this Framework. For neighbourhood plans that have already been submitted, the qualifying body may choose to withdraw the plan and update it to take account of this Framework."

The Parish Council notes the transitional arrangements and confirms that it does not intend to withdraw the Plan.

Question 1: Comments by Essex County Council on the Submission Plan

The Examiner asks the Parish Council, in the first instance, to address the County Council's comments in full and consider the scope and extent of any proposed amendments to the draft Plan that will be necessary to address the County Council's comments.

The Examiner further requested that the Parish Council provide a schedule of the proposed draft amendments that it considers can be made in response to the County Council's comments.

The table below combines a response to the individual elements of the County Council's comments and, where considered appropriate, a suggested amendment to the draft Plan.

Summary of comment	Parish Council's response	Suggested amendment to Draft Plan Additions are shown underlined and deletions are struck through and highlighted
Chapter 1: Reference is made to the Minerals Local Plan and the Waste Local Plan providing an update on the review of these development plan documents. No changes are requested	Noted	None

Summary of comment	Parish Council's response	Suggested amendment to Draft Plan Additions are shown underlined and deletions are struck through and highlighted
Chapter 4 – Objective 3 The County Council recommends the inclusion of two new policies in the Plan to address their concerns at the lack of a policy framework addressing net-zero operational performance or embodied carbon. The County Council refers to two planning policies developed by the Essex Planning Officers Association in 2025 and seeks their inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan to address their concerns.	There is no evidence that these policies have been the subject to the required consultation required of development plan policies. We understand that it is the role of the Examiner to examine the Plan before him and not to address matters that have not been included. The regulations concerning neighbourhood plan preparation do not specify what matters it should address, other than land use matters. The Parish Council is of the opinion that there is no scope for the inclusion of these policies.	None
Chapter 4 – Objective 4: The County Council requires a policy to be included in the Plan on EV charging in Chapter 10.	The regulations concerning neighbourhood plan preparation do not specify what matters it should address, other than land use matters. The Parish Council is of the opinion that there is no scope for the inclusion of this policy.	None
Chapter 4 – Objective 5: The County Council recommends amendments to the Objective.	The Parish Council would support the proposed changes to the Objective should the Examiner consider it necessary in order to meet the Basic Conditions.	None
Chapter 4 – Objective 6: The County Council makes reference to the process for seeking highway improvements. They do not seek changes to the Objective	Noted	None
Chapter 5:	Noted	None

Summary of comment	Parish Council's response	Suggested amendment to Draft Plan Additions are shown underlined and deletions are struck through and highlighted
The County makes reference to the Supported and Specialist Housing and Accommodation Needs Assessment. They do not seek changes to the neighbourhood Plan.		
Chapter 6: The County Council seeks appropriate references to the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy	It is unfortunate that it has taken over one year from submission to get the Neighbourhood Plan to examination. It is to be expected that there would be changes in policy context and statutory requirements in such an extended period. The Parish Council suggests amendments to paragraph 6.16.	6.16 The Environment Act 2021 places a statutory requirement for all appropriate developments, defined in the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, to deliver a minimum 10 per cent measurable net gain in biodiversity. Planning applications must be accompanied by a statement explaining if the proposal is subject to the requirement for biodiversity net gain and why together with details relating to the baseline on-site conditions. The same Act also introduced a statutory requirement to produce "Local Nature Recovery Strategies" and the County Council is the responsible body for the preparation of the Strategy for Essex and the <u>Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (ELNRS) was published in July 2025. It identifies existing spaces for nature, areas of biodiversity importance, and locations offering opportunities for nature recovery. Planning applications should identify how the proposal has had regard to the ELNRS and the opportunity to deliver new habitat creation. Its aim will be to find broad locations for the creation or improvement of habitat and identify those most likely to</u>

Summary of comment	Parish Council's response	Suggested amendment to Draft Plan Additions are shown underlined and deletions are struck through and highlighted
		provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment. At the time of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan the final Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy had yet to be published.
Policy GBD8: The County Council seeks clarification that the policy does not apply to education establishments given the presence of adopted Local Plan Policy LPP 60.	The Parish Council acknowledges that the Local Plan contains a specific policy relating to the protection of education establishments. Given the scope for confusion and duplicity, the Pariah Council suggests some amendments should the Examiner consider it necessary to amend the Plan in this respect.	Para 8.5 Insert the following at the end of the paragraph: <u>Policy GBD8 does not apply to education establishments.</u> Policy GBD8 Insert the following at the end of the policy: <u>Proposals relating to existing education establishments will be considered in the context of Braintree Local Plan Policy LPP 60 (July 2022) or any subsequently adopted policy for education establishments.</u> Glossary Amend the Glossary as follows: Community Facilities: Facilities and uses generally available to and used by the local community at large for the purposes of leisure, social interaction, health and well-being or learning. This will include, but not be confined to, community centres, public houses, sports venues, cultural buildings, places of worship, medical facilities, shops, post offices, libraries, schools and other training and educational facilities.

Summary of comment	Parish Council's response	Suggested amendment to Draft Plan Additions are shown underlined and deletions are struck through and highlighted
Chapter 9: The County Council puts forward an aspiration and/or policy relating to provision of broadband and mobile phone signals.	The suggested policy has not been the subject of consultation and, unlike the examination of local plans, the neighbourhood plan regulations do not expect proposed modifications to be subject to consultation prior to the Examiner's Report being published. We understand that it is the role of the Examiner to examine the Plan before him and not to address matters that have not been included. The Parish Council is of the opinion that there is no scope for the inclusion of an additional policy and that bit is not needed in order to make the Plan meet the Basic Conditions.	None
Chapter 10: The County Council states that they require an EV charging policy in this chapter.	The regulations concerning neighbourhood plan preparation do not specify what matters it should address, other than land use matters. The County Council cannot "require" neighbourhood plans to include any particular policies. The Parish Council is of the opinion that, given the stage at which the Plan has reached, there is no scope for the inclusion of such a policy.	None
Policy GBD9 The County Council seeks an amendment to the policy to include a requirement for proposals to satisfy the highway and transportation authority.	The Parish Council does not consider this amendment is necessary given that the ultimate decision taker is the local planning authority, having taken account of all material matters to the proposal.	None

Summary of comment	Parish Council's response	Suggested amendment to Draft Plan Additions are shown underlined and deletions are struck through and highlighted
Great Bardfield Design Guidance and Codes The County Council raises a number of comments concerning the content of this evidence document and seeks a range of changes.	Like all development plan documents, their evidence documents are prepared at a point in time and often become out of date, either before a Plan is adopted or soon after. This is the case with then Design Guidance and Codes which were prepared as through the government's neighbourhood plan grant programme. This programme is no longer available and amendments to the document would need to be funded by the Parish Council. The Parish Council does not consider that this cost is necessary.	None

Question 2 – The Local Plan

The Examiner asks that the Parish Council provides updated text for Section 3 in relation to the status of the development plan documents. The Examiner also asks, "The Qualifying Body should also take account of the District Council's comment regarding paragraph 7.4 in Section 7."

Parish Council response

It is disappointing that it has taken over one year from submission of the Plan to the District Council to get the Neighbourhood Plan to examination and that such changes are now necessary. The Parish Council would have envisaged that some natural updating of the Referendum version of the Plan would be necessary to bring it up-to-date. It would be expected that this would relate to the state at which the Neighbourhood Plan has reached and references to policy changes at a national and local level. Given the publication of the new NPPF during the examination period, it is considered that a new paragraph is inserted after paragraph 3.4 to reflect either that:

1 – "the Government has consulted on a draft revised NPPF (December 2025) and that at the time the Referendum Plan was published the final version had not been published and that the Neighbourhood Plan was examined against the December 2024 NPPF", or

2 – "a revised NPPF was published in August 2026 and the planning policies in that Framework will need to be taken into account in determining planning applications. The Neighbourhood Plan was examined against the December 2024 NPPF under the transition arrangements of set out in Annex A of the August 2026 NPPF."

In response to the Examiner's request, the Parish Council proposes the following amendments to the Local Plan and Minerals and Waste Plan paragraphs. (Additions are shown underlined and deletions are struck through):

- 3.7 In 2024 the District Council announced the commencement of a Local Plan Review. ~~Early work commenced later that year and, at~~ At the time the Neighbourhood Plan was examined, the District Council had completed the "Preferred Options" consultation on the Local Plan Review but had yet to commence consultation on the final draft. submitted to the District Council, consultation on the "Issues and Options" had just concluded. The Review ~~is~~ was not expected to be adopted until June 2027 ~~the end of 2026~~.
- 3.8 Essex County Council is the Minerals and Waste Authority for the Plan area and is responsible for the production of mineral and waste local plans. The Development Plan in Great Bardfield therefore also comprises of the Essex Minerals Local Plan 2014 (MLP) and the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan 2017 (WLP). These plans set out the policy framework within which minerals and waste planning applications are assessed. They also contain policies which safeguard known mineral bearing land from sterilisation, and existing, permitted and allocated mineral and waste infrastructure from proximal development which may compromise their operation. At the time the Neighbourhood Plan was examined, the County Council had commenced the preparation of a replacement Minerals Local Plan but had yet to commence consultation on the final draft.

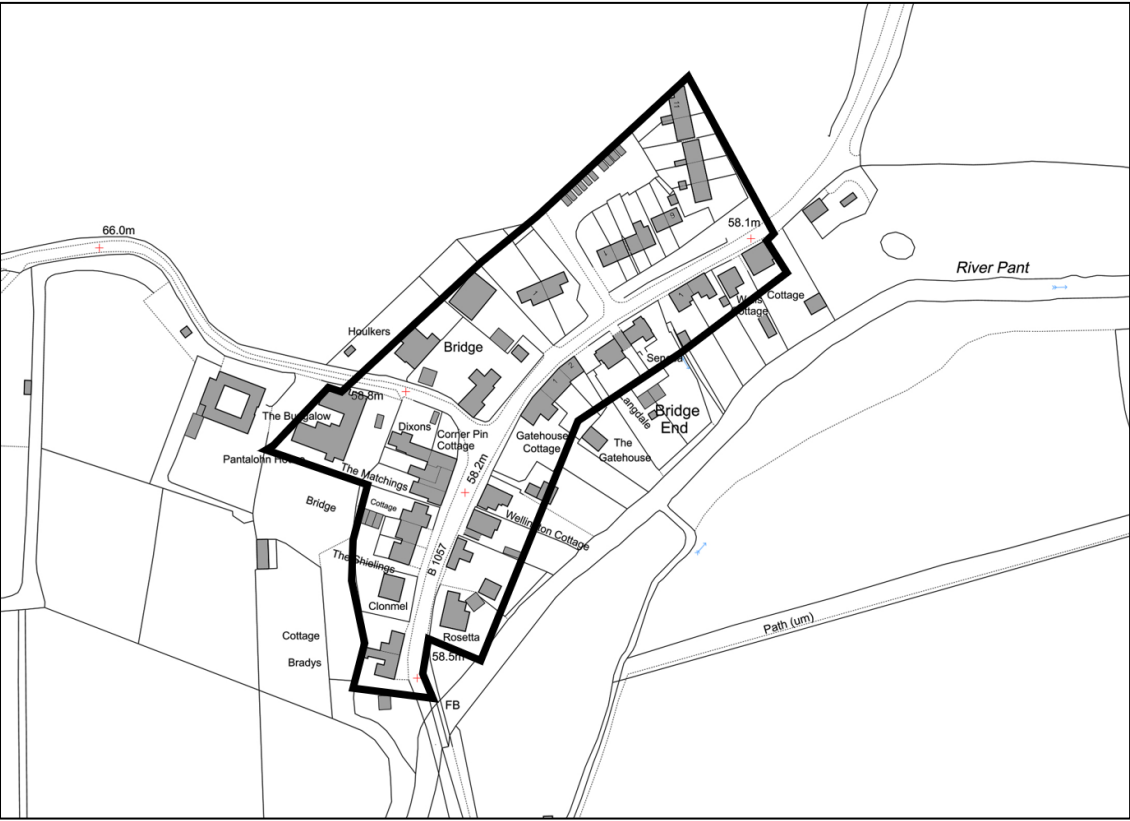
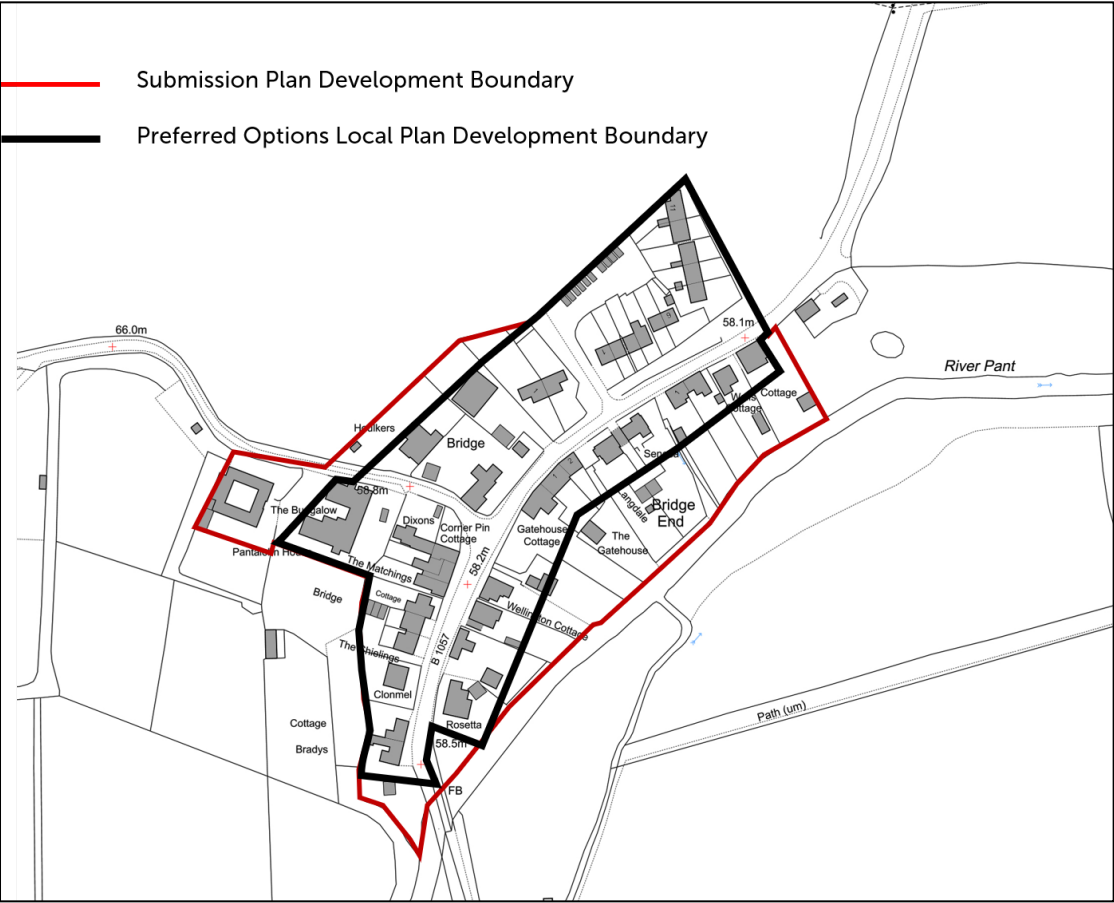
Paragraph 7.4

The comments of the District Council concerning the proposed amalgamation of strategic policies is noted but the Parish Council considers that the Local Plan has not progressed sufficiently to be able to make references to such amalgamation given that the final draft Plan has yet to be published.

Question 3 – Policy GBD1 – Bridge End Development Boundary

The Parish Council notes the Examiner's suggestion that the Bridge End Development Boundary, as identified on Map 2 and the Policies Map, be amended to reflect the boundary proposed in the Local Plan Review. Clearly, at this time, the Local Plan Review has little status as it has only been subject to the "Preferred Options" consultation, and the Parish Council does not know if further changes are proposed at the Regulation 19 pre-submission consultation stage as that Plan has yet to be published. This is especially pertinent as the boundary proposed in the Local Plan excludes a dwelling (Stables Retreat) on the western edge of the Boundary as illustrated below. Likewise, it is not possible to predict if further changes might arise because of the examination of the Local Plan.

Notwithstanding this, Map 1 has been amended to reflect the proposed Development Boundary as requested. The first map below illustrates the changes and the second, the Preferred Options Local Plan Development Boundary which would form the new Map 1 should the Examiner be minded to require a modification this respect.



Amended Map 1 suggestion

We are unclear as to the request to amend the Policies Map as this is a reproduction of the adopted Policies Map which remains the adopted development plan at the time of examination and is expected to remain so at parish referendum. The Parish Council considers that this should remain in its current form.

Question 4 – Policy GBD7 – Design Considerations

The Parish Council considers that the policy and its requirement to refer to the checklist is appropriate and our consultant has successfully had this approach confirmed in some 30 made neighbourhood plans in seven local planning authorities as listed below (url links to the made Plan provided).

[Assington Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Baylham Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Bentley \(Suffolk\) Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Beyton Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Botesdale and Rickinghall Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Brettenham \(Suffolk\) Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Broomfield \(Chelmsford\) Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Cheveley Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Copdock and Washbrook Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Drinkstone Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Freckenham Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Great Barton Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Great Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Haddenham Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Hargrave Review Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Hartest Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Lawshall Review Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Little Waldingfield Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Necton Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Playford Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Reach Necton Neighbourhood](#)

[Rushmere St Andrew Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Sproughton Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Sutton \(Cambs\) Replacement Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Tattingstone Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Thorndon Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[West Row Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Wickhambrook Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Witcham Neighbourhood Plan](#)

[Worlington Neighbourhood Plan](#)

Should the Examiner wish to amend the policy, we would suggest the second paragraph is amended as follows to ensure a proportionate approach to the consideration as to how a proposal satisfies design considerations:

Policy GBD 7 - Design Considerations

Proposals for new development must, as appropriate to the proposal, demonstrate how the proposal addresses the Character Area Guidance, as identified in the Great Bardfield Design Guidelines and Codes, and create and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment.

In addition, all planning applications should, as appropriate to the proposal, demonstrate how they satisfy the requirements of the Development Design Checklist in Appendix 4 of this Plan.

Question 5 – Policy GBD5 – Local Green Spaces

We note that the Local Green Space Appraisal has not been provided. It was submitted to the District Council along with the other “submission” documents, but the District Council does not appear to have uploaded it onto the consultation platform. We attach the detailed Appraisal to this response which includes detailed Ordnance Survey base maps and a description as to how the Parish Council considers each identified space meets the NPPF criteria. It is the intention of the Parish Council that the Appraisal, like the Landscape Appraisal and Design Guidance and Codes, would form part of the suite of evidence documents that would be available to support the Plan both during consultation and once ‘made’.

We therefore consider that the Appraisal, had it have been uploaded at the time, would have addressed the concerns raised by the Examiner and the Appraisal negates the need for a further appendix in the Plan. However, should the Examiner consider the appendix is necessary, we provide the maps below which can be copied into the Plan.

1 Recreation Ground/Playing Field/Children's Playground



This is a detailed street map of a residential area in London. The map shows a network of streets including Mill Road, Brook Street, and St John's Terrace. A large green field is highlighted in the center, and several ponds are marked. The map includes labels for various buildings and landmarks, such as the Catholic Church of The Holy Spirit, the Church of St Mary-the-Virgin, and the Great Hall. Distances between points are indicated by numbers like 67.0m, 63.8m, and 66.9m. The map also shows a GP (General Practitioner) and a Primary School.

4 Causeway Green

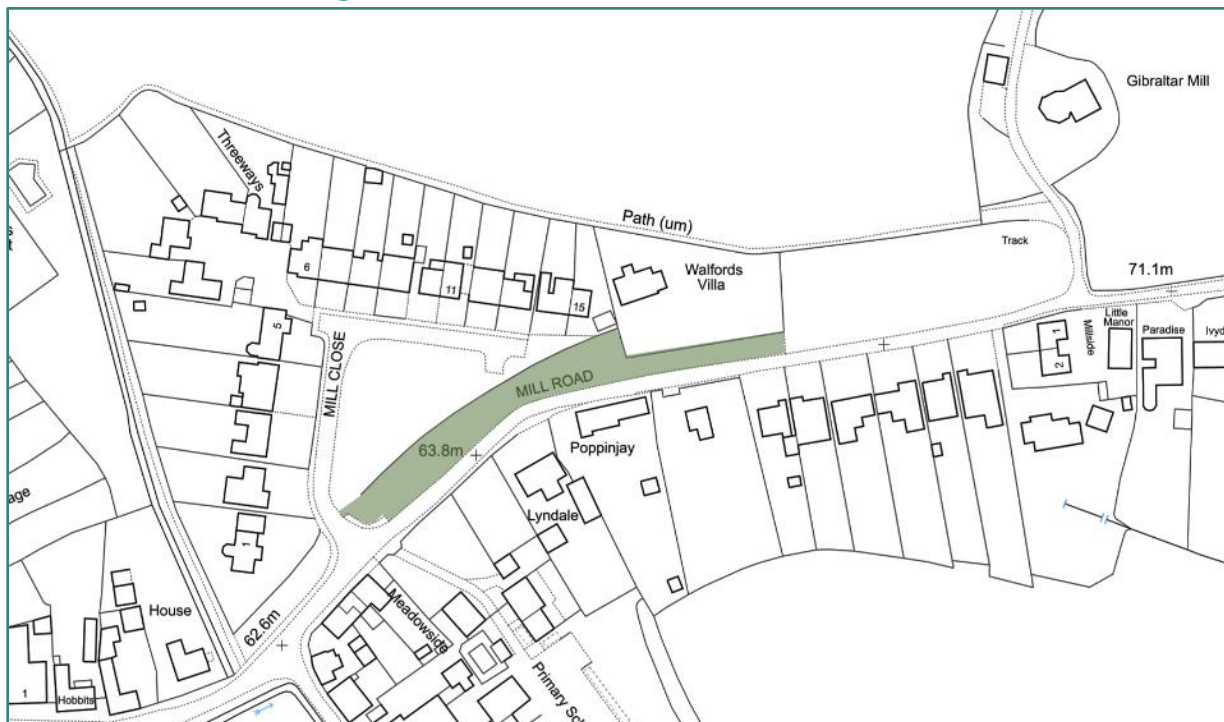


5 School Green



This is a detailed street map of a residential area in Walsford. The map shows a network of streets including Mill Street, St John's Terrace, Mill Road, and a path (unpaved). Various houses and buildings are labeled, such as Khan Villa, Beaumont, Orchard House, Cottage, The Maltings, Crown Cottage, House, and Friends House. A tennis court is located near the top center. A pond is situated at the bottom center. A Catholic Church of The Holy Spirit is located at the bottom right. The map also shows a primary school, a bus stop, and a GP (General Practitioner) surgery. Distances between key points are marked, such as 67.0m, 68.1m, 64.5m, 63.8m, and 65.3m. The map is oriented with North at the top.

8 Mill Road Verge



9 Land near Gibraltar Mill



[illegible]

The map shows the village of Brindley with a green shaded area located between High Street and the River. The map includes labels for 'Durham House', 'The Bell Inn (PH)', 'Town Hall', 'El Sub Sta', 'Pond', and 'Brindley'. A blue arrow points to a location on the riverbank.

[illegible]

13 Deer Park View Green



14 Land off Bendlowes Road



15 School Playing Fields



16 Land rear of Telephone Exchange



17 St. Mary's Villas Verge



18 Castle Shot Verge



The map shows a network of roads and paths connecting various residential areas. Key features include:

- River Pant**: A waterway running along the right side of the map.
- Bridges**: Several bridges are labeled, including 'The Matchings Bridge' and 'Bridge End'.
- Buildings**: Numerous individual houses and cottages are shown, many with specific names like 'The Bungalow', 'The Mutchings', 'The Shielings', 'Cottage Bradys', 'Birchley House', 'Mantons Cottage', 'Rosetta', 'Clonmel', 'The Mutchings', 'Corrier Pin Cottage', 'Gloxons', 'Houlikers', 'Seneca', 'Langford', 'Old Granary Cottage', and 'Wells Cottage'.
- Paths**: A path labeled 'Path (um)' runs diagonally across the lower part of the map.
- Distances**: Specific distances are marked along the roads: 66.0m, 58.8m, 58.1m, 58.5m, and 58.4m.
- Other Features**: A green-shaded area is labeled 'Meadow', and there are two locations marked 'FB'.

The map shows a village layout with a central green-shaded area. To the left, a street labeled 'VINE STREET' runs vertically. Buildings along this street include 'The Vine (PH)', 'The Maltings', 'Orchard House', 'Crown Cottage', and 'Friends'. To the right of the green area, a 'Tennis Court' is marked. Further right, a 'Path (um)' is indicated. The bottom right shows 'MILL ROAD' and 'Meadowcroft'. A scale bar at the bottom left indicates 67.0m. Various other buildings and streets are labeled throughout the map.

23 Northampton Meadow Green



24 Northfield Verge



The map shows a residential area with various streets and buildings. Key locations include:

- Streets:** VINE STREET, Hill Side, Walton House, Box Cott, Ethel, Brook House, White Hart, The Firs, Hunters Cottage, The Homestead, Hill Side Cottage, The Long House, Prances, Godstone, Cottage, LB, GP, FB.
- Buildings and Landmarks:** The Old, Walton House, The Vine (PH), Hill Cottage, Stubbards, The Chapel, Cottage, North, GP, 67.0m, Crown Cottage, Rose Cott, El Sub Sta, Friends House, Bucks House, Vine Cottage, The Old Dairy, The, War Meml, 68.1m, GP, 71.9m, LB, Box Cott, Ethel, GP, Brook House, White Hart, The Firs, Hunters Cottage, The Homestead, Hill Side Cottage, The Long House, Prances, Godstone, Cottage, LB, GP, FB, 6.
- Other Features:** A network of streets, a grid of building footprints, and a dashed line indicating a boundary or path.

[illegible]

28 Land at top of Aleinor Avenue

