

IF YOU WERE GOING TO BUILD A NEW TOWN, YOU WOULDN'T START HERE

1. Foreword and Apology

This Overarching Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of the six Parish Councils identified below and SERCLE (Stop Erosion of Rural Communities in Local Essex). It supplements responses made by the individual bodies to the consultations on the draft Braintree Local Plan in August 2016 and July 2017 in respect of the 'Garden Community' proposed for West of Braintree ('WoB').

Regrettably, we cannot adhere to the request from the Inspector to rely only upon responses to questions on the eight Matters he has formulated, perhaps with an accompanying statement. Instead, we have prepared this overarching Statement. It is more than 3,000 words in length, substantially less than statements on the 8 Matters.

It will hence provide a more coherent response to the Local Plan and utilise the numerous potent arguments against the local plan-making espoused by the three local planning authorities ('LPAs'), Braintree District Council ('BDC'), Colchester Borough Council ('CBC') and Tendring District Council ('TDC'). To do otherwise would diminish the force of our considered reaction, and so confer legitimacy on the way the 3 LPAs have approached the local plan-making process (we also have to ask why is not four LPAs – where is Uttlesford District Council in all this?).

2. Root of Objection

The three LPAs have brought shame on the planning process by proposing 'garden settlements' without thorough and proper analysis of how new homes could be provided in a more sustainable way in more sustainable locations. This leads unequivocally to the conclusion that this has all been driven by the potential for access to the much greater sums of public money that building a standalone 'garden community' offers to the LPAs versus using brownfield sites located close to existing towns.

There are two individuals responsible for the egregious folly of 'West of Braintree' – the Leader of Braintree District Council and the owner of much of the land set aside for it. The latter responded to BDC's 'Call for Sites' in a way that any landowner might – putting forward his land for residential development: positive responses such as his are not always met with positive responses on the part of LPAs, particularly if, as in his case, the great majority of the land in question was undeveloped land in the countryside.

The Braintree Chronicle (on the 30th November 2015) has attributed to the Leader of the Council that he;

said: ***The Council must save £3.34million by 2020***

vowed: **to build thousands of homes** to offset having to make more than £3 million of savings by 2020

warned: "*tough decisions*" will need to be made in light of a reduction in government funding, but explained providing more homes will bolster council coffers.

said: "*Building more houses will increase our tax base as we will receive more funds from things like new homes bonuses and council tax.*"

Financial considerations alone should not and should never be the root of plan-making. In our view, the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') at paragraph 14 emphasising the importance of 'sustainable development' gives us lay people a good insight into the necessarily more complex, objective process that should be the root of plan-making;

At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking.

For **plan-making** this means that:

- local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;
- Local Plans should meet *objectively assessed needs*, with *sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change*, unless:

— any *adverse impacts* of doing so would *significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits*, when *assessed against the policies in this Framework* taken as a whole;
or

— specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.

Public money is vital to the creation of expanded or new settlements, yet, in this instance, there is none, or very little.

The assessments made by and on behalf of the 3 LPAs have not been properly costed and tiny and highly unrealistic contingencies have been built in. What if, as is the norm for most public building projects of recent times, costs go higher? See for example, Crossrail, the Olympic Stadium, the Millennium Garden Bridge (scrapped at a cost of £50m to the public).

So, if it all were to go wrong, precious and attractive countryside, valuable productive, agricultural land and the small settlements within and adjacent will be lost or spoiled in the folly of building new homes (with ludicrously optimistic assumptions being made about how jobs, public transport and physical and social infrastructure will come along at the same time).

3. Process

PRINCIPLE 7 - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

THE GARDEN COMMUNITIES ARE A LOCALLY-LED INITIATIVE, AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT WILL BE SHAPED THROUGH ENGAGING EXISTING COMMUNITIES AND EMERGING NEW COMMUNITIES; RESIDENTS WILL BE EMPOWERED TO CONTRIBUTE TO SHAPING THE FUTURE OF NORTH ESSEX.

Despite these words from the North Essex Garden Communities Charter published in June 2016, numerous intelligent people have complained to us that they have been unable to follow what the LPAs are doing or proposing and worry that 'Issues and Options' are underway when the principles have not been established or agreed.

In respect of Andrewsfield, BDC has repeatedly said that it is not looking at the detail, it is just an area of search etc. It chose the site then commissioned the reports i.e. it is a flawed process. This alone represents an unsound Plan.

A local plan process that moves quickly and soundly is a desirable thing: but it cannot, ever, be rushed or be confusing to the public.

The very fact that this key stage is being carried out either side of the Christmas and New Year period, when the majority of people have far too many important and everyday things to occupy them rather than worry about hugely significant things that affect their futures and the future of the place in which they live, says a lot. Normally developers and planning consultants are careful to avoid submitting planning applications that might prove contentious or controversial before Christmas, lest they be accused of trying to pull a fast one on the concerned public. The same ought to apply to the timing of important stages of the local-plan making process.

The 3 LPAs ought to be ashamed at selecting as the venue for the Examination a football stadium accessible only by car and 27 miles and 35 minutes' drive in off-peak conditions from Great Saling and the other affected villages and hamlets and with capacity to seat only 60 members of the public. It cannot have been difficult to find an accessible town centre facility with more seating? The importance of public participation in planning, something I was brought up on, seems to have gone right out the window in this instance.

The process so far has been non-consultative and confusing with the majority of existing local residents' opinions being totally ignored and, setting aside its negligible emphasis on genuinely sustainable town planning, it has been profoundly undemocratic.

4. Housing Need and Location

The Department of Communities and Local Government ('DCLG') published on 14th September 2017 in draft its Proposed formula for assessing housing need.

The indicative assessment of housing need in Braintree District based on proposed formula for 2016 to 2026 is 835 dwellings per annum.

This should be compared with the Current Local Assessment of Housing Need, based on the most recent publically available document. This is 716 dwellings per annum.

There is, therefore, a proposed increase of 119 dwellings per annum with the proposed formula.

If the draft revised indicative assessment of housing need in Braintree District were to be adopted, there would need to be 8,350 new homes in the District between 2016 and 2026. These would be spread across existing settlements, in particular the largest towns, and would not be concentrated on only one site. To do otherwise would go entirely against the long-established principles of town planning.

If the same draft revised indicative assessment of housing need were applied up to 2033, the end year of the Local Plan, there would need to be 14,195 new homes in the District, again spread across it.

5. Sustainable Development: BDC Brownfield Land

The key issue for us is that BDC has taken up a Government initiative and BDC sees its role to use this to its advantage by securing funding.

In the short timescale available it made rapid decisions to choose the sites without any prior consideration of suitability and have gone way further than the local population needs without any consideration of local demographics to fit the funding requirements. All supporting reports were commissioned thereafter and there is no consideration of alternatives. We refer the Inspector to the report submitted by Shalford Parish Council that ask why not build on the southeast side of Braintree, especially as Essex County Council has just secured funding for a junction off Millennium Way.

The only reason against so doing is that it would be considered a town extension and not be eligible for funding support. However it would prove to be much more cost efficient in delivering housing in the right place, with connectivity, cycling access, employment, social facilities, recreational facilities including parks and a golf course to link with and provide mutual support.

The landowners have not shown any demonstrable commitment to Garden Communities at all – it is the District and Borough Councils who are doing all the legwork and getting the funding to pay for the commissioned reports for evidence. Everything is done in the wrong order. There was clearly time pressure to succeed with the funding grants.

As is demonstrated below, using BDC's own figures, BDC has an excess of housing land on offer to it- it was its choice to limit options. This has been met with considerable, well-founded local opposition.

BDC published its SHLAA 2016 in September 2017 for Brownfield land. This includes 'Andrewsfield' (also known as Saling Airfield) with potential for 7,500 new homes. Andrewsfield is by no stretch of the imagination 'brownfield'.

Excluding Andrewsfield, Potential Housing Yield from 110 brownfield sites put forward in the Call for Sites of 5,730 new homes.

This list of Brownfield sites was only produced and released AFTER BDC had decided that West of Braintree was its ideal location on which to build. The Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget Statement on 22nd November 2017 made clear that;

Planning should focus on

- **Urban areas making the best use of brownfield land**
- **building high quality, high density homes around transport hubs.**
- **Permit more homes aimed towards first time buyers**

In respect of the last element, we note below the assumption in the Viability Assessment for the LPAs by Hyas Associates Ltd that its modelling assumed only 30% affordable homes, not the 40% required by current local planning policy.

The BDC SHLAA 2016 summarises the Agent's Comments about Andrewsfield at column AL. The LPA appears to have been swept away at the alluring prospect of development on it.

*Refer to previously submitted information on outstanding site attributes; **No land acquisition issues, potential to link to and improve currently limited A120 junction, significant gravel deposits, potential for rowing lakes and country park, potential development jointly with UDC on previously developed airfield and incorporating existing business units, potential linkage with housing proposals to west, realisable long term new settlement of sufficient size to be truly sustainable and intended/deliverable high level of affordable housing***

We have a number of comments on this:

a. Land Ownership and Location

It has been reported that BDC rejected certain brownfield sites much closer to the urban hub of Braintree (and therefore capable of supporting its facilities imperiled over the years because of numerous factors including reduced public expenditure, Freeport, changed patterns of retailing and shopping) because the multiplicity of ownerships made things 'complicated' – so much easier to deal with an individual landowner of a site of 910 hectares, with an estimated Potential Housing Yield (SHLAA column AS) of 7,500 new homes.

Witham is the most sustainable location in Braintree District – on the main London Liverpool Street – Chelmsford – Colchester – Ipswich –Norwich railway line, on the A12 Trunk Road and with good facilities – the sensible places to consider for substantial further expansion. Apparent consideration of this by BDC? Not a lot.

b. The A120

The A120 – paragraphs 215, 216 and 219 in the Conclusions section to the Transport Assessment by Ringway Jacobs and Essex County Council on the Preferred Option state unambiguously;

In this respect, the Conclusions to the Preferred Option Highways and Transport Planning Assessment published by Ringway Jacobs and Essex County Council in March 2017 are of fundamental importance.

Paragraph 215 states:

Essex Highways Transport Planning team have been commissioned by Essex County Council (ECC) and Braintree District Council (BDC) to assess the likely transport impact of the Local Plan preferred option and identify possible mitigation measures. BDC provided a list of sites to be modelled as their preferred option, including three variations in housing growth and associated employment at the 'Garden Communities'. In the low growth scenario approximately 12,000 homes and 7,500 jobs are forecast to be created by 2033, whereas approximately 16,000 homes and 9,500 jobs are forecast to be created by 2033 in the high growth scenario.

Paragraph 217 states:

21 key junctions were identified for more detailed assessment, including investigating the impact of possible improvements to the junctions to better accommodate growth in traffic. Without such mitigating measures only one of the junctions was shown to be able to accommodate 2033 forecast demand. It should be acknowledged however that 11 of the junctions are currently at capacity and are forecast to be over capacity in 2033 with background growth alone. Two of these junctions could be mitigated, although one of these relies on the implementation of an all movements junction at J24 on the A12. At a

further six junctions it was possible to recommend specific improvements that will alleviate future forecast demand. One of these is also dependent on the implementation of an all movements junction at J24 on the A12. A further two junctions are being studied by Highways England on the A120 for short term improvements prior to any possible new A120 route. There is also ongoing work to refine trip generation characteristics of the proposed 'Garden Communities'.

Paragraph 219 states:

It is clear that using conventional and accepted analysis of forecast trips, it will not be possible to accommodate the forecast vehicle trips on the network, despite even with significant junction improvements. In addition to infrastructure improvements, there will have to be significant interventions to reduce the demand for private car travel and improve public transport, cycling and walking provision and uptake.

What the authors are saying, effectively, is:

"It's stuffed now, it will be stuffed in the future, it doesn't matter if you stuff it even more.

We are not trying to make the network work. The best that we can do is to mitigate the effect of the proposed development in 2033.

We cannot provide the level of capacity that would mean people do not experience delays driving to/from work, school, college or wherever else in the morning/evening peaks".

Deepening the gloomy prognosis, the Andrewsfield Garden Village Transport Assessment prepared by Capita and published June 2015 does not contain a 'Capacity Assessment'. Detailed Capacity Assessments are essential in order for the local highway and planning authorities to assess the traffic impact of a proposed development. Without a Capacity Assessment it is difficult, if not impossible, to know how Capita reached its conclusions. The LPA, which exhibits a marked lack of interest in detail, does not seem too concerned about this: it should be.

Property developers (understandably) do not want to commission the full work, including traffic Capacity Assessments, until a planning application is to be submitted. In the case of Andrewsfield, the Inspector needs to take this important consideration into account. What it means is that any conclusions reached in respect of traffic impacts at Andrewsfield will be suspect, more than possibly ruinously suspect.

c. Rowing Lakes and Country Park

Rowing lakes and a small country park are a lamentable sop for the significant, extensive, adverse environmental effects of WoB: Andrewsfield and the surrounding land are countryside, glorious countryside laced with narrow lanes and dotted with settlements tiny and not much bigger with a rich and interesting heritage, it should stay that way and new development – and which is very much needed - focussed in and close to existing urban centres so as to support them and enable people to live reasonably economically in this expensive part of England with appalling poor public transport provision without having to go to the often unaffordable expense of running a car.

d. Other comments on the SHLAA 2016 Entry for Andrewsfield

| Column | Subject | Entry | Comment |
|--------|---|---|--|
| J | Conformity with Spatial Strategy | No | |
| W | PDL ('previously developed land) / Greenfield / Mixed Greenfield - Brownfield | Previously developed land and greenfield | <p>The vast majority of the site is greenfield – the runway is a grass strip, not tarmac. There is a small number of buildings and a road crosses the airstrip. The Club House, including the 'Millibar' is open to the general public.</p> <p>The NPPF definition of Previously Developed Land at Annex 2 on page 55 is;</p> <p><i>Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure.</i></p> <p>A dishonest depiction of the nature of the land.</p> |
| AA | Site Access | Various, including potential for new access to A120 | <p>See 'The A120' above.</p> <p>Sophistry.</p> |

| | | | |
|----|------------------------|--|--|
| AK | Other (constraints) | Former airfield is poor quality agricultural land | <p>Airfield</p> <p>The airfield is very much active. It accommodates an internationally-accredited flying training school for pilots from this country and overseas.</p> <p>Links between the flying school and the international airport at Stansted should be obvious to the LPA, as should its importance to the local economy. About 25 aircraft are based at Andrewsfield.</p> <p>Agricultural Land</p> <p>The Natural England map shows the land as being Grade 3 (of 5 grades) and which is 'good to medium quality' agricultural land.</p> |
| AW | Overcoming Constraints | <i>Spatial strategy amendment would be required.</i> | Yes, it's that simple, apparently. |

Thus, it is not the least unreasonable to state that the characterisation by BDC of Andrewsfield in its SHLAA 2016 is much less than honest.

In all the material produced by the LPA, Andrewsfield, its nature and characteristics is not is not described, let alone assessed; a further mortal wound to the credibility of this local plan-making process.

6. Core Provisions of the NPPF

These are well-known and it is unnecessary to repeat them. However, the clear exhortations of paragraph 155, resonate with the six Parish Councils and those they represent and with SERCLE because the LPA in their collective view ignored them;

Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide section of the community should be proactively engaged, so that Local Plans, as far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area, including those contained in any neighbourhood plans that have been made.

7. TCPA Core Principles for 'Garden Cities'

The Town and Country Planning Association ('TCPA') published *'The art of building a garden city: Garden city standards for the 21st century'* in July 2014. Three of the core principles of 'Garden Cities' are;

- ❖ **A wide range of local jobs in the Garden City within easy commuting distance of homes.**
- ❖ **Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods.**
- ❖ **Integrated and accessible transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.**

The Parish Councils and SERCLE, although admiring vision and sensitive, realistic, well-considered developments of 'vision' into proper planning, are most doubtful that any of these three core principles will come about at WoB.

The TCPA published a blog on the 17th November 2017 *calling on the Chancellor to be brave and bold in the Budget, setting out a commitment to genuine garden cities that:*

- ***have local support;***
- ***provide affordable homes for all;***
- ***are in sustainable locations, well served with public transport;***
- ***ensure the highest-quality design standards on everything from accessibility to climate change;***
- ***provide for work and a vibrant social and cultural life close to people's homes;***
and
- ***provide for the sharing of development values for the long-term stewardship of community facilities and green spaces.***

The TCPA has long advocated the standards necessary to build genuine garden cities and is publishing two new guides today which set out the criteria for how new communities should be located and how they can be financed. A key lesson from the past is that success depends on national and local government doing its homework on the right locations. Garden cities can't be produced like rabbit out of a hat; they require quality and an expert process of site selection, with space for real community engagement about the benefits of scale growth.

The blog is at: <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Blog/the-budget-is-the-real-test-of-governments-commitment-to-quality>

None of the text in **bold** above applies to West of Braintree.

The TCPA published the first 'Garden city standards for the 21st century: Practical Guides for Creating Successful New Communities' in draft on the 17th November 2017. Guide 1 is about 'locating and consenting new 'garden communities'' (submitted now for addition to the Evidence Base). This contains numerous **Recommendations**. The following are highly relevant to West of Braintree. We comment briefly on whether or not we consider that the LPA has adhered to them in the formulation of its proposals as they are for West of Braintree.

Organisational Approach (section 3.2)

The local authority should clearly set out in the Local Plan or a supporting document the proposed process for assessing the need for and locations of new 'Garden Communities', including how local people will be involved. NOT DONE

Local councillors should play a proactive role in explaining the process and communicating to local residents and investors both the long-term vision and the multiple benefits of investing in large-scale development. NOT DONE

Locational Criteria (section 3.3)

Authorities should consider the full range of growth solutions, using a sound evidence base to ensure that the right long-term approach is taken and avoiding any temptation to 'bolt on' housing estates to existing towns and villages where a more sustainable long-term option is available. NOT DONE

Processes of identifying locations for new 'Garden Communities' should consider how places are connected physically (i.e. by rail and road), economically (i.e. through economic and travel-to-work patterns) and socially (i.e. through the provision of services between settlements) as a key indication of likely success and to maximise opportunities to facilitate low-carbon lifestyles. NOT DONE

Resource use within environmental limits, the achievement of social justice, and positive impacts on biodiversity and assets of ecological, landscape, historical and climate resilience value should be used as key assessment criteria in SEA/SA and other site assessment processes.
NOT DONE

Where sites are put forward by the private sector, authorities should require the proponent to demonstrate how the sites meet these criteria. NOT DONE

The conclusions of the Parish Councils and SERCLE in respect of these Recommendations alone, and it is acknowledged that they are in draft and by a non-government organisation, albeit one with tremendous influence over the practice and development of town and country planning in this country and overseas, is that the Local Plan is seriously flawed and unsound.

Developing the principles for town planning further is 'Smart Growth', an American concept in origin. This is a sustainable approach to planning that emphasises compact and accessible urban communities. In the United Kingdom, a group of environmental NGOs has formulated and agreed a set of principles for Smart Growth in the UK for use in planning, transport planning, community development and urban regeneration. At the heart of 'Smart Growth' is a belief in the importance of using land, a precious and non-renewable resource, efficiently and sustainably. It helps amplify the sustainable development commitment set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The fourth of six principles promotes distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place:

"We should protect and promote local distinctiveness and character and our heritage, respecting and making best use of historic buildings, street forms and settlement patterns".

Thus far the 'principles', published on the 26th February 2017, are supported by the Campaign for Better Transport, the Campaign for the Preservation of Rural England ('CPRE'), the Association of Small Historic Towns and Villages of the United Kingdom (ASHTAV), North of England Civic Trust and Civic Voice, amongst others.

Smart Growth UK published its report 'Garden Towns & Villages: Unwanted, unnecessary and unsustainable' in May 2017. This is submitted with this Overarching Planning Statement to add to the Evidence Base. The Executive Summary to the Report reads as follows;

Government support for the “garden towns” and “garden villages” programme has echoes of New Labour’s “eco towns” programme for creating large-scale developments in the countryside. The 10 garden towns and 14 garden villages supported by DCLG have secured support from their local authorities, but only following the promise of cash for the hard-up councils involved.

The settlements’ developers claim to be pursuing an idealistic vision but, in reality, their developments would simply create new garden suburbs using the very low-densities and greenfield locations garden city principles demand.

DCLG has contradicted its claim to want them to adopt “garden city principles” by saying they need not adopt any set of principles. Many are simply existing large greenfield development proposals rebadged with some green-wash rhetoric. At least two are former eco town proposals.

All of the “garden towns” are simple agglomerations of major urban extensions already proposed, in many cases miles apart and lacking any relationship to one another. Only three of the 14 garden villages meet DCLG’s land-hungry requirement that they should be discrete settlements, but several of their promoters admit they hope to add further sprawl, once initial developments are complete.

While most of the proposals are vague about proposed densities, it is clear they will squander scarce building land by using very low densities.

DCLG urged applicants to make good use of brownfield land, but nearly all the approved proposals are mostly or wholly greenfield.

At very best, the programme could generate around 10,000 homes a year, a tiny proportion of the new homes the Government believes are needed. Their location does not respond to those areas most in need of new homes. Most also aim to meet local ambitions for economic growth by including new employment space, but such space is likely to attract new residents to their areas, further reducing their potential to reduce housing shortages.

Their low-densities and rural locations militate against their ability to attract sustainable transport and, despite rhetoric about walking and cycling, the best most can expect is low frequency bus services. A few are close to railway stations, but proximity to a rail-based network is needed to attract significant proportions of residents away from cars. Almost all the approved schemes, however, sit beside or astride major trunk roads or motorways.

Although the developments are supposed to enjoy “community support”, opposition is growing despite the strongly moralistic rhetoric about garden city principles adopted by promoters. But there is nothing ethical about a heavily indebted and densely populated country, which can already only feed just over half its rising population, squandering scarce farmland on low-density housing.

The Smart Growth approach offers a better way to meet the country’s housing need without the acute environmental damage the garden towns and villages programme threatens.

We recommend the Government, devolved administrations and local authorities withdraw support from garden town and garden village developments.

8. Absence of any Factor needed to create a new Settlement West of Braintree

a. Preamble

WoB features none of the attributes that have led to the creation of settlements in the past, such as a good supply of water (see below c. Adequate Drainage and Sewerage) or a location with good access (by any means of transport).

No New Town or Expanded /Overflow Town or Garden City in the United Kingdom has ever been pursued without there being, or there being programmed or planned, a railway station.

b. Railway Stations

There are three railway stations at various distances from WoB (using the CM6 3TH postcode);

- i. Braintree: branch line terminus, hourly service to Witham via Braintree (Freeport) and Cressing: 11.5km / 7.1 miles – 13 minutes off-peak drive
- ii. Witham: mainline railway station; 21.2km / 13.2 miles – 21 minutes off-peak drive

iii. Stansted Airport: 20.6km / 12.8 miles – 21 minutes off-peak drive

The six Parish Councils and SERCLE support initiatives to increase the use of public transport and for people to walk and cycle, reducing the need to sue the car. However, all these railway stations are too far away to be of regular use by people living in the area now, let alone a new town at WoB. For any public body to believe that they have realistic and economical potential as the basis for an ambitious new public transport system featuring rapid transit buses linking them to WoB with no programmed funding at a time of continued austerity is fantastical and delusional.

We note that Network Rail has made no contribution to the plan-making process. As the body that controls railways in this country, this is a significant and troubling absence.

In respect of Braintree railway station, the route of the railway east of Braintree is single track, limited to hourly service and the topic of decades of prevarication about the 'Cressing Loop' that could ease capacity issues to improve the current service from its terminus in Braintree.

There has been reference to Stansted being a transport hub – it is nothing of the sort - a hub is centrally-positioned (as with the hub of a wheel), whereas the railway station serving the airport is a terminus.

Manchester Airports Group, which owns Stansted Airport is on record as saying that it does not want commuters using the railway station which is there to serve the airport alone. The £3.50 charge simply to drop people off at the Airport Terminal would deter all but the most determined and well-off commuter in any event.

There are very limited public transport bus services to Stansted Airport.

The option to extend the railway east of Stansted Airport (as originally envisaged by the architects) was compromised early on as further airport buildings including Radisson Hotel were built.

There is no record of Network Rail ever considering filling the gap in the network between Braintree and Stansted Airport. This is not in itself surprising. What is more surprising is that this section of rail infrastructure could have been a genuine catalyst for Braintree regeneration as Stansted was developed and grew and yet seems to be a blind spot for the County's planners. This all adds to what we as local people regard as a massive credibility gap on the parts of BDC and ECC regarding the integrity of the WoB proposals.

The original Braintree to Bishops Stortford railway line alignment, axed as part of Beeching line closures in the last 1960s, now accommodates sections of Essex County Council's Flich Way Country Park, underneath the B1256 Dunmow Bypass or is lost under farmland.

c. Adequate Drainage and Sewerage

Dean McBride, who has developed considerable expertise in community sewerage infrastructure, has closely examined the North Essex Sewerage Infrastructure for the proposed Garden Communities, particularly in respect of West of Braintree.

The crux of the problem with West of Braintree in drainage and sewerage terms is quite simply: It is not sustainable, the area has too many constraints to meet the NPPF guidelines. His conclusion is that in respect of this single, important infrastructural point, it is extraordinary that it has been brought forward for housing.

The local sewerage works at Rayne and Braintree are not sustainable. The Braintree District Council Water Cycle Study, published March 2017 states that significant reinforcement of the network of water recycling centres ('WRCs) is required to provide for the additional growth at the West of Colchester Garden Community and may be required for the West of Braintree Garden Community. The WRCs at Braintree, Bocking, Coggeshall and White Notley will require improvements to ensure that the increased waste water flow discharged does not impact on the quality of the receiving watercourses and their associated ecological sites.

Even if a complete new sewerage works is built for WoB even that wastewater still has to be pumped to another sewerage works (at Bocking, 6km / 3.7 miles away) and from there (and with its own treated wastewater) will have to be discharged somewhere upstream.

The two local rivers, Pods Brook and the Ter, are too small to discharge treated wastewater. Nevertheless, the North Essex Garden Communities Integrated Water Management Strategy Stage 1 Report from August 2017 notes that if the new WRC discharges into the river Ter, it is assumed that it would discharge into the upper reaches of the catchment. This option would require approximately 1.3 km of new pipeline and a new pumping station.

There is confusion in the documentation about Bocking Sewerage Works: on one hand it could take sewerage from the WoB development at the beginning and then in another instance it could do take sewerage only up to 2032.

The drainage ditches and other water areas will flood because the density of the clay soil, and in one part of Saling the clay is 10 metres deep, makes using soakaways impractical, leading to excess run-off.

Therefore, the run-off from all the *circa* 9,000- 10,000 new homes will need to discharge into sewers, the majority of them new. Typically, the run-off from perhaps 70% - 80% of homes would discharge into sewers.

The LPA indicates that overhead electrical power lines may have to be used if it is not possible to lay pipes in clay. This further diminishes claims that WoB is sustainable.

The density of clay varies across the area but in the village of Great Saling and Bardfield Saling most people are on the septic systems. Homes with mains drainage are confined to a few 'Grove Villas'.

The alternatives considered included building a 'supersize' sewerage works for the three 'garden communities' to drain to. If that was the case, a super sewer would have to be built for WoB to connect to it (as it would have to bypass the Bocking Sewerage Works), bearing in mind the local rivers used for the dispersal of the treated wastewater would have to be greater in size as not to harm the environmental standards for that much treated wastewater returning to the river system and be more central for all 3 'garden communities' to attach to.

Dean McBride has written that, as an outsider who knew what he was looking for he had found that the information available to the general public to be quite invisible. It took him 3 weeks to obtain constructive information. The general public should have been given information on the state and capacity of the sewerage system in the Braintree 'Infrastructure Delivery Plan' under the section 'Utilities', but it was missing only talking about future 'garden communities'.

Having read the Braintree IDP. Mr McBride challenged BDC that the IDP was not fit as evidence for the BDC Local Plan; the response was 'yes it is'. However, that must be read it in conjunction with the Water Cycle Study produced by Anglian Water and the Integrated Water Management Strategy Stage 1. It is highly unreasonable for the LPA to expect the general public to do that before making informed comments as consultees on the Local Plan.

What WoB does feature though (aside from the rural landscape described briefly above) are;

- i. Grade 3 agricultural land which is of good to moderate quality and important to enabling the United Kingdom to produce more of its food.
- ii. Ancient Woodland – Bosted Wood
- iii. Heritage landscape – Humphrey Repton Garden

The latter two have been scarcely acknowledged by BDC in its plan-making.

9. Viability

The Statement on Viability prepared for the Parish Councils and SERCLE is confined to infrastructure and land costs. However, it is vital to note that Hyas Associates Ltd makes clear at the start of its Report that the modelling in its appraisal illustrates a scenario in which affordable housing is provided at 30% of total housing stock. BDC policy requires 40% affordable housing.

This further signifies the significant unviability of the project. It also invites serious objection on planning policy grounds at national and local levels, as it goes fundamentally against the Core Principles for Garden Cities set out by the TCPA and mocks the Government's very recently re-espoused emphasis on the need for balanced communities and homes for first time buyers.

The Statement on Viability should leave no one in any doubt about the financial stupidity and inherent bad and rushed planning of this project, built on the shakiest of foundations.

on behalf of;

Bardfield Saling Parish Meeting

Felsted Parish Council

Great Bardfield Parish Council

Great Saling Parish Council

Rayne Parish Council

Shalford Parish Council

SERCLE (Stop Erosion of Rural Communities in Local Essex)

STATEMENT ON VIABILITY

1. Personal Details and Experience

My name is Edward Charlesworth. I live in Rayne and have been a resident of the area for 3 years. I have followed the Braintree Local Plan process with interest and present this Statement on Viability from a position of some expertise on behalf of the Parish Councils identified in the Overarching Planning Statement and SERCLE. Hence, references below to SERCLE mean me on behalf of the Parish Councils and SERCLE.

I am Managing Director, Head of Latin America Wholesale Credit at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. I have 21 years' experience in European and International lending markets, either as a transactor or as a risk manager. I was previously head of Corporate Credit Risk EMEA at Bank of America Merrill Lynch (a portfolio of more than \$80 billion), and have extensive experience of appraising, approving and managing large, highly structured and leveraged transactions for some of the world's leading companies and financial investors.

2. Preamble

The Viability Assessment produced by Hyas Associates Ltd in April 2017 to support the garden settlements proposed in the North Essex Local Plans ('the Hyas Report') in the Evidence Base does not demonstrate the economic viability of the project due to the lack of information provided and significant flaws in methodology.

The residual value methodology utilised by Hyas in the model is wholly inappropriate for such a long term project as it fails to take into account the substantial financing costs attached to projects such as this which operates with a cashflow deficit (income from land sales does not cover costs) for a number of years, and therefore has to borrow in order to invest.

Hyas does not demonstrate the financing requirement of the project or provide any sensitivity or stress test to help quantify the risks to the project. Instead, the purpose of the modelling is to determine a 'viable' land value, ignoring the facts that;

- i. landowners have a minimum expectation of land value; and
- ii. the project will need to borrow (either in the form of equity or debt) in order to buy that land.

SERCLE has used the GCLS model to recreate the Hyas viability study in order to more accurately demonstrate the cashflow of the project and to sensitise and stress test the numbers.

This analysis is intended to illustrate how sensitive a 40 year model is to a small number of variables. It should be noted, however, that it makes no comment as to the efficacy or otherwise of the assumptions relating to;

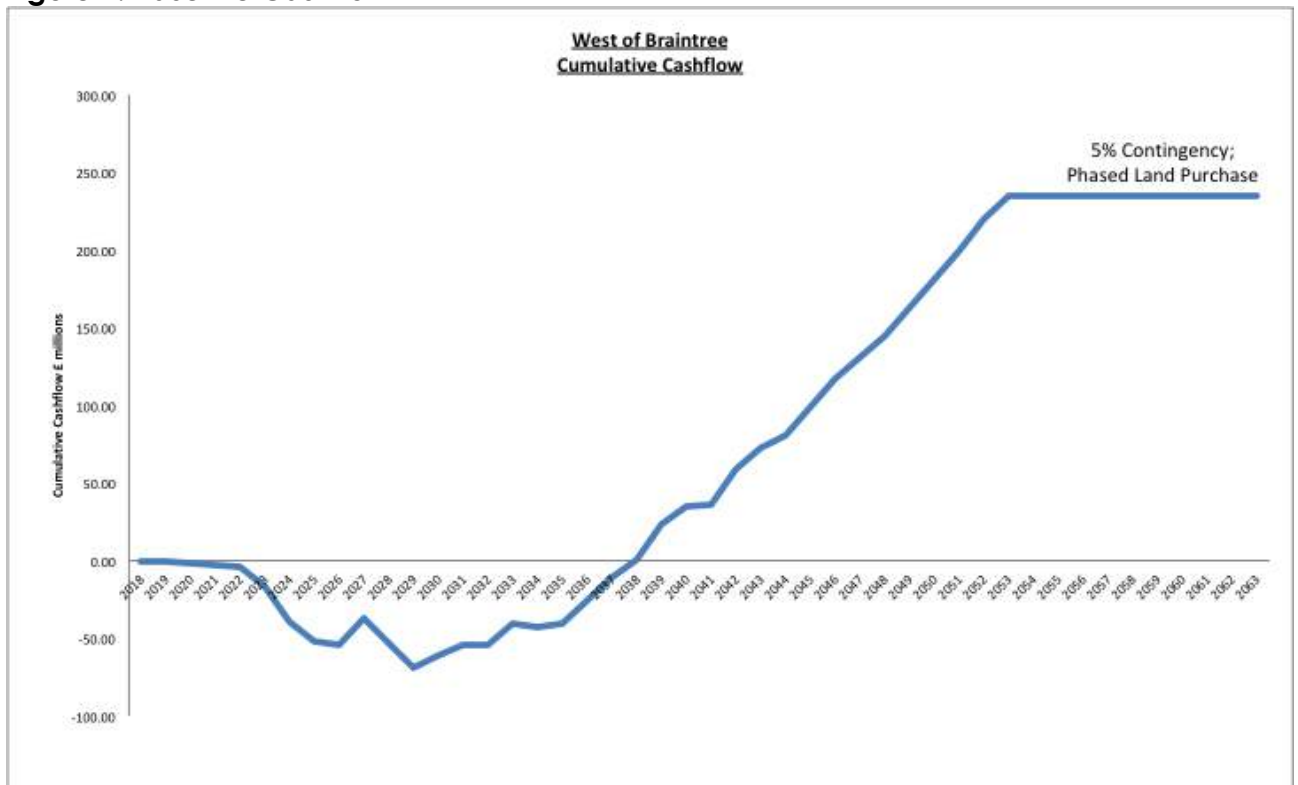
- i. build costs;
- ii. garden city premium;
- iii. application of inflation; or
- iv. the viability threshold.

3. Land Accumulation

The Hyas model does not model the purchase of land. It has been amended by SERCLE to include land accumulation costs on the basis laid out in the evidence base i.e. purchase of land 2 years ahead of disposal. Though it appears implausible that land owners would wait up to 40 years for land proceeds, SERCLE has no evidence that this has not been agreed with landowners as information about deals has not been released into the public domain.

Using the blended average £100,000 per acre land purchase cost referred to by AECOM in the Evidence Base, this creates a baseline cashflow profile as shown in **Figure 1** below:

Figure 1: Baseline Cashflow



This would suggest that, after financing costs at a 6% interest rate, the project generates a positive cashflow of £235 million at 2017 prices. This might suggest that there is significant headroom in the plan.

4. Sensitivity Analysis

Some very simple stress testing of assumptions, however, demonstrates how much risk lies in those figures. This is explained below.

i. Infrastructure Costs/ Contingencies

Table 1: Infrastructure Assumptions from Hyas Viability Model

| On Site | Total |
|---|-----------------|
| Country Park Landscaping | £5.0 m |
| A4 Shalford Road/ Pods Lane Quietway | £0.3 m |
| PT5 Rapid Transit & Flagship Cycle Route | £5.0 m |
| PT7 Transit Hub | £6.0 m |
| Travel Plan measures (@£1,500/unit) | £13.0 m |
| Employment Support (@£1,000/unit) | £8.5 m |
| Off Site | Total |
| Utilities - Primary Substations, gas & telecoms | £13.0 m |
| Utilities - 5km trunk mains, discharge upgrade & 6km connection to WWTW | £9.0 m |
| Active Modes A1, A2, A3 & A4 (Cycleway improvements) | £6.7 m |
| PT4 - A131/A130 Bus Lane | £8.0 m |
| PT6 - Rapid Transit & Flagship Cycle route NW Braintree | £6.0 m |
| R2 & R3 - A120/ B1256 improvements (interim & final) | £15.0 m |
| R1 - A120/B1256 New Western Junction | £7.0 m |
| Contrib to strategic Public Transport Solutions (@£1,500 per unit) | £13.0 m |
| Sub Total | £115.5 m |

Though difficult to prove as an outsider to the process without resources to conduct commercial due diligence, there are strong reasons to believe that the baseline level of infrastructure spend and the assumed 5% level of contingency on those costs are wholly inadequate. For example, the Viability Model only includes:

- £24 million for Utilities-related infrastructure, despite the need for significant investment in water, waste and electricity;
- £80 million for road, rail, bus and cycling infrastructure, which is intended to include multiple rapid transit routes due to the remote nature of the site. As an illustration of how ambitious / optimistic these costings are:
 - the Cambridge guided busway cost more than £150 million,
 - light rail projects, according to Government figures, have averaged £25 million per mile. West of Braintree to Braintree is at least 5 miles and to

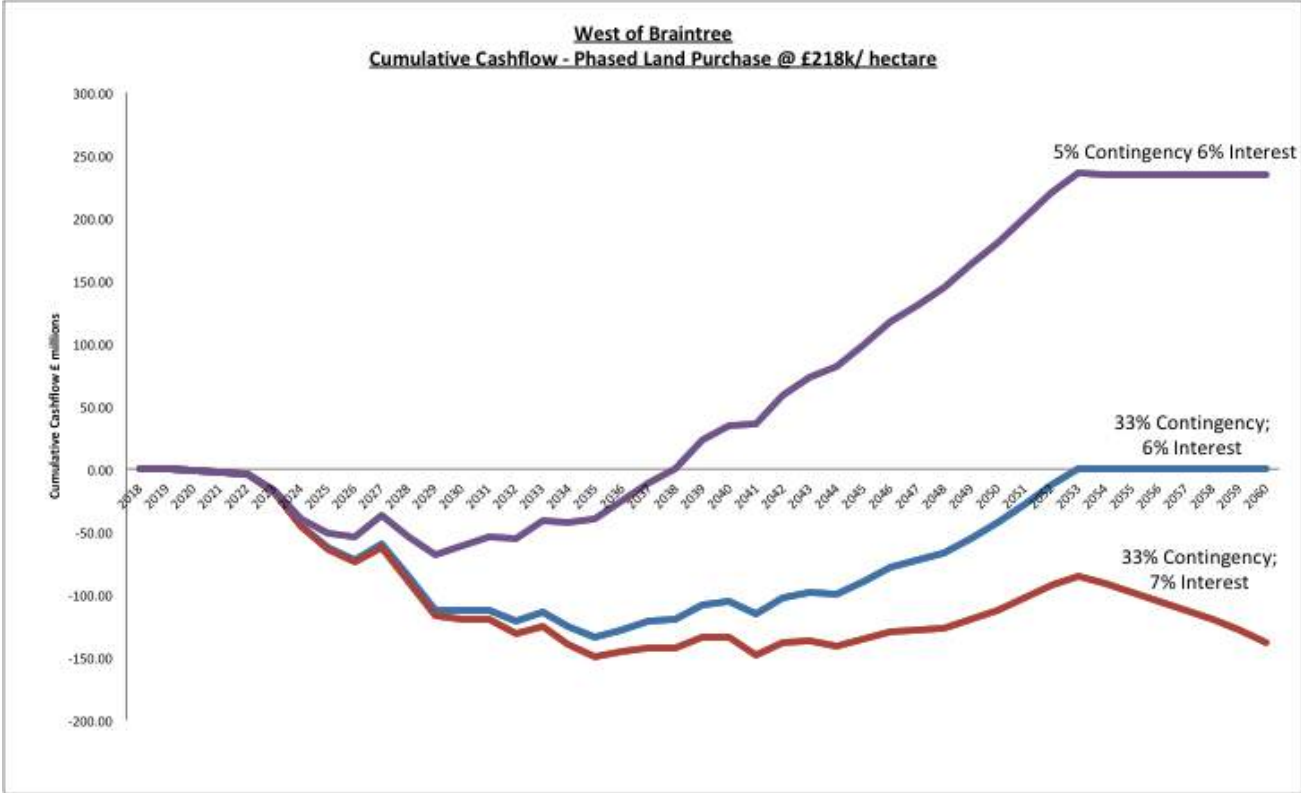
Stansted Airport around 10 miles. Hyas has budgeted £11m for rapid transit for West of Braintree. That effectively rules out light rail as an option.

As **Figure 2** below demonstrates, the cost of infrastructure is absolutely vital, as a 33% increase in those costs (either through an increase in the baseline cost or increased contingency) would take the project to a breakeven level – i.e. cash generated would be just sufficient to pay for the infrastructure and other costs, including land. Even with a 33% increase, total infrastructure investment (excluding land and enabling works) for a new, remote town would only be c. £150 million, i.e. similar to the costs of the Cambridge guided busway. It is implausible that total infrastructure costs would be so low when measured against that relevant, costed and similar yardstick.

ii. Interest Rates

Such a long term project is extremely sensitive to prevailing and future interest rates. Hyas has assumed a 6% cost of debt in its assumptions. Assuming the increased level of infrastructure spend and adding just 1% to the interest rate would take the project from breakeven to a £100 million deficit. The project stops generating cashflow before the debt is repaid and is therefore insolvent.

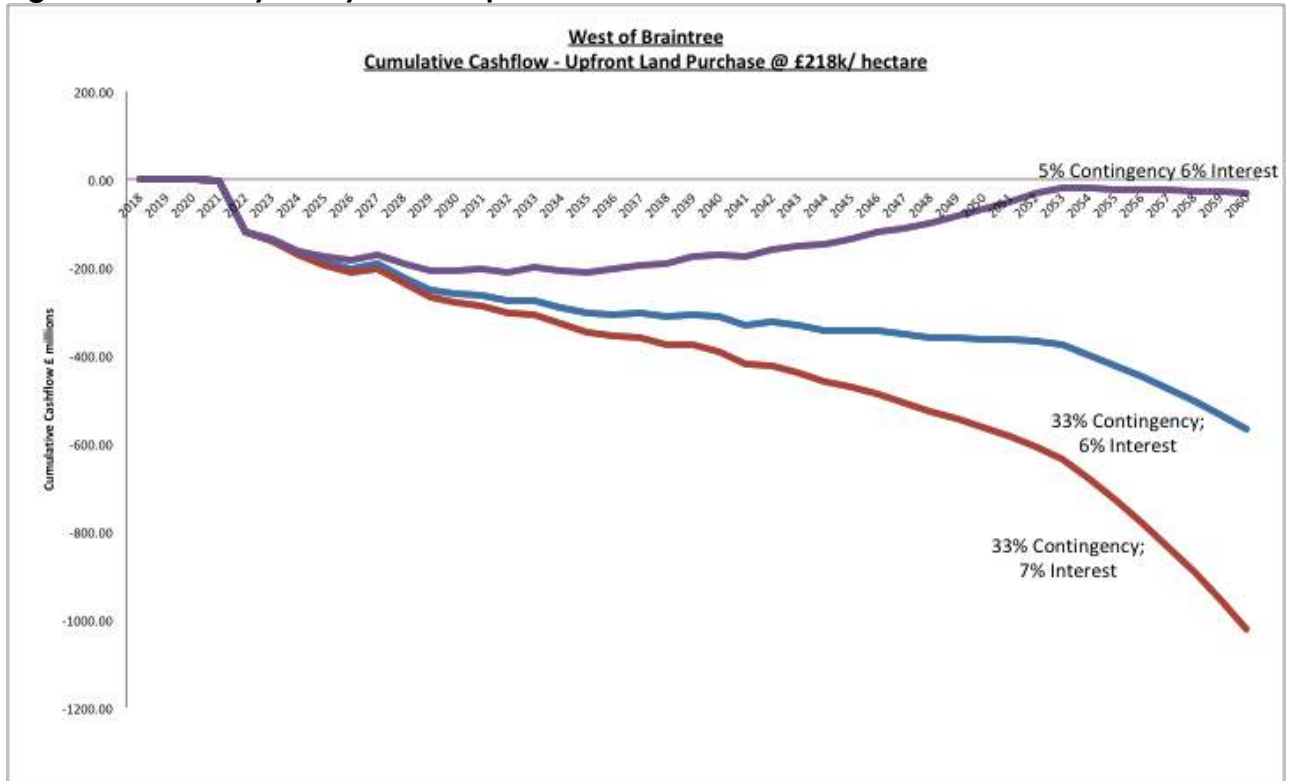
Figure 2: Contingency and Interest Rate Sensitivity



iii. Land Accumulation Assumption

Though better from a cashflow perspective, a phased land purchase appears implausible. The phasing of the land purchase is vital in determining viability as the cost of the land will need to be financed, potentially for a large number of years, before it is sold on in parcels. To illustrate this, **Figure 3** demonstrates the cashflow of the project under the same scenarios as **Figure 2**, but with the land cost taken in year one.

Figure 3: Sensitivity Analysis with Upfront Land Purchase



In this scenario, even the Baseline (5% infrastructure sensitivity, 6% interest rates) does not cover its costs over 40 years. In the arguably more realistic scenarios with 33% increase in infrastructure costs, the debt level spirals out of control as the income in each year is insufficient to cover project costs and interest on the accumulated debt.

5. Affordable Housing

This Statement on Viability has, for simplicity, largely focused on infrastructure and land costs as well as the sensitivity to interest rates. However, it is vital to note that Hyas makes clear at the start of its Report that the modelling in its appraisal illustrates a scenario in which affordable housing is provided at 30% of total housing stock. BDC policy requires 40% affordable housing. **Figure 4** demonstrates, under the phased land acquisition case what impact Affordable Housing has upon the cashflows of the project.

Figure 4: Affordable Housing Sensitivity

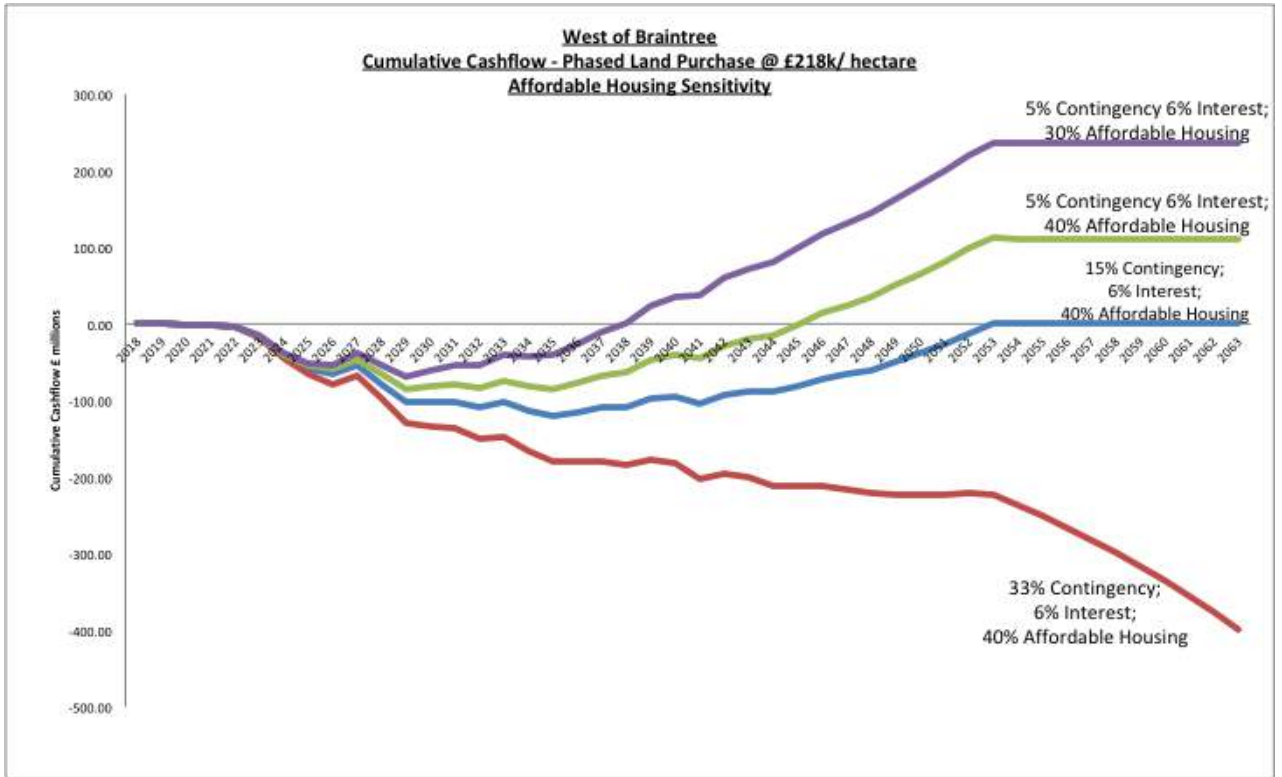


Figure 4 demonstrates that breakeven on Infrastructure Costs with 40% Affordable Housing is only a 15% increase from Hyas' Base Case (versus 33% in the 30% Affordable Housing case). That renders the business case marginal by any sensible definition.

6. Conclusions

It is clear from the simple sensitivity analysis above that either insufficient stress testing has been undertaken by BDC and NEGC, or that the stress testing has been undertaken but the results not made public.

No commercial lender would consider lending to a proposition such as this, where relatively small changes to key assumptions render the project insolvent. Basic financial due diligence has not been undertaken, which puts taxpayers in peril and may lead to material unexpected public subsidy being required.