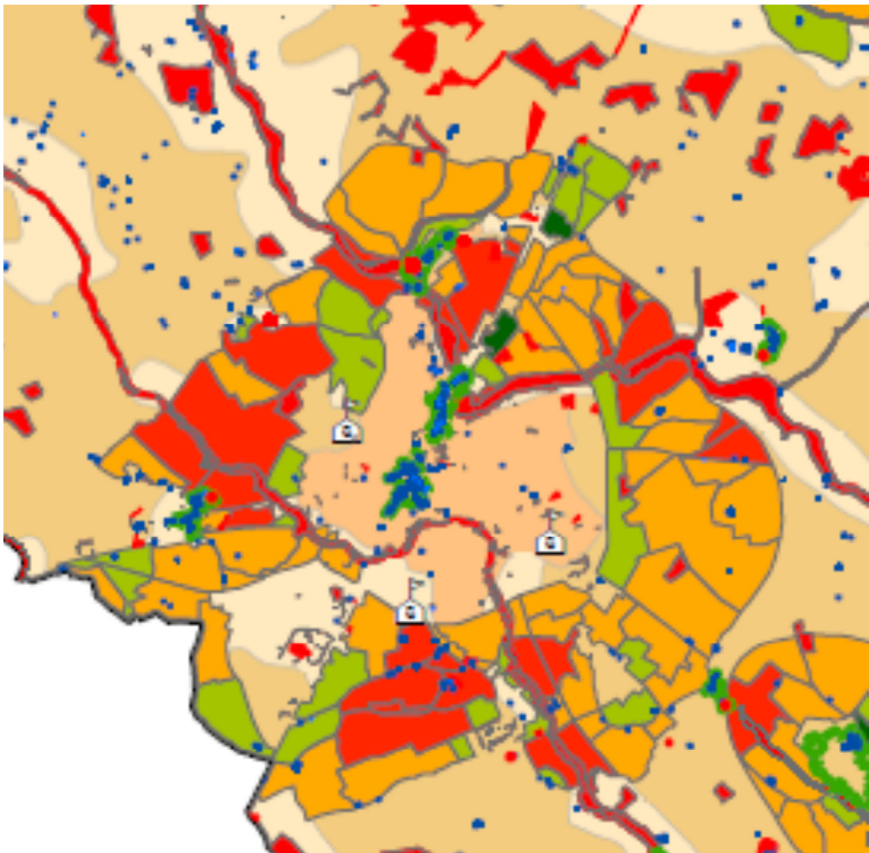


# Spatial Strategy Formulation



Summary of evidence, and how it influenced the spatial strategy in the Publication Draft Local Plan.

Braintree District Council - 2017

## **Publication Draft Local Plan**

### **Spatial Strategy Formation**

The following outlines the formulation of the spatial strategy for the Braintree District Local Plan. It outline how the Plan and evidence base support the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF, a summary of the Council's evidence base and how it influenced the spatial strategy, and the different spatial strategy options.

### **Publication Draft Spatial Strategy**

The spatial strategy for the district is set out in the following policies;

LPP17 – Housing Provision and Delivery sets out the proposed spatial strategy for the District.

LPP18 to LPP22- Strategic growth sites

LPP36 – Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpersons Accommodation

SP2 – Spatial Strategy for North Essex

SP3 – Meeting Housing Need

SP4 – Employment and Retail

SP7 – Development & Delivery of New Garden Communities in North Essex

SP9 – Colchester/Braintree Borders Garden Community

SP10 – West of Braintree Garden Community

### **National Policy**

The NPPF sets out the three dimensions of sustainable development.

An economic role - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

A social role - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

An environmental role - contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

The NPPF goes on to say that plans and decisions need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.

The NPPF is built around the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which for the purposes of plan making mean that the LPA should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, that plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid changes, unless, any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole, or specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted.

Paragraph 156 and 157 of the NPPF outlines what a Local Plan should cover.

Paragraph 158 NPPF states that planning authorities should ensure that the Local Plan is based on adequate, up to date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environment characteristics and prospects of the area.

The Local Plan meets the requirements of the NPPF and the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Council has identified its objectively assessed need for housing and other uses, and seeks to meet those in full through the Local Plan. The Council's evidence base does not suggest that this need is unable to be met and doing so would not conflict with any of the principles contained within the NPPF. Sufficient flexibility has been included in the Plan such as a 10% buffer on its housing figure, to ensure that housing delivery can be met over the plan period. Other principles of sustainable development are met through the non-strategic policies contained in the Plan.

### **Development Boundary Review Document**

To assist Braintree District Council in determining which sites may be most appropriate for inclusion within development boundaries, a methodology for reviewing those boundaries was written and approved by Councillors at the Local Plan Sub-Committee.

Thirteen criteria were agreed for which sites should or should not be included within development boundaries. The main criteria was that development boundaries should follow clearly defined physical features such as walls, fences, hedgerows, roads and streams, however some development boundaries may follow along the rear of built development rather than physical features to prevent inappropriate background development, for instances where dwellings have large back gardens. Other areas to be excluded include sports fields and parks, equestrian uses, which are outside of built up areas. Employment sites which are physically related to the settlement should be included.

### **EVIDENCE BASE SUMMARY**

The following documents comprise the evidence base which helps to support the Draft Local Plan. It covers a range of issues which have implications for sustainable development, as well as the spatial strategy. As such these documents help determine which areas are more sustainable and suitable for development than others.

### **Agricultural Land Classification**

Paragraph 112 of the NPPF states that Local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of best and most versatile agricultural land. It goes on to say that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary,

local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

The majority of the district is identified as being best and most versatile agricultural land which is defined as land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification. As we have so much high quality land it is difficult to direct land to those areas with lower land quality.

For growth around Braintree, sites at Towerlands, Broad Road and land to the east of Great Notley are Grades 2/3, as are sites at Feering. Both garden communities are within areas identified as grade 2, however no alternative sites are available with a lower land classification, with the majority of Monks Wood also being of grade 2. The lowest land classification in the district is grade 4 on a small area between Sible Hedingham and Halstead which would not be a natural extension to development of either settlement, and around the Twinstead, Henny, Alphamstone and Lamarsh area, which is considered a unsustainable location, remote for the main towns and sustainable transport options.

Besides the urban areas, other areas in non-agricultural use include the former airbase at Wethersfield which is accessed to the main trunk road and rail network via rural villages narrow and single carriage road, and several other smaller areas which are identified as woodland or have other environmental designations. Grade 3 land is also often within river valleys which are potentially prone to flooding.

### **Dedham Vale AONB and Proposed Search area for AONB Review**

A Site of Special Scientific Interest or SSSI may be made on any area of land which is considered to be of special interest by virtue of its fauna, flora, geological or physiographical / geomorphological features.

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is an area of countryside in England, Wales or Northern Ireland which has been designated for conservation due to its significant landscape value. Areas are designated in recognition of their national importance, by Natural England.

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF outlines the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Within that presumption it indicates that development should be restricted in AONB as well as some other designations. With the exception of SSSI and a draft Local Green Space at Coggeshall none of these designations are present in the district.

Paragraph 115 states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty as they have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Paragraph 116 goes on to say that planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.

No AONB is present within the district however there is an area of search for an extension to the Dedham Vale AONB. Dedham Vale is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on the Essex-Suffolk border. It comprises the area around the River Stour between Manningtree and Smallbridge Farm, 1 mile east of Bures, including the village of Dedham in

Essex. It is part of the area known since the artist's lifetime as Constable Country, as it was made famous by the paintings of John Constable.. As such no strategic allocations are proposed within that search area.

### **Employment Land Needs Assessment**

Paragraph 22 of the NPPF should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose, and that land allocations should be regularly reviewed.

Paragraph 156 states that Local Planning Authorities should set out the strategic priorities for the area in the local plan including strategic policies to deliver the homes and jobs needed in the area as well as other uses.

This evidence base identifies the key characteristics of the local economy in relation to employment. It concludes that the areas employment needs to be expanded and protect existing provision of employment land. However, some vacant employment sites which no longer met the needs of modern occupiers could go to alternative uses. It also concludes that the provision of new, purpose-built stock along good lines of transportation may be necessary to grow and attract logistics business. It also suggests which existing sites within the district need to be retained or expanded.

The Publication draft Local Plan employment section takes into account these recommendations and retains the allocation of the majority of employment sites within the district in particular in the main towns, as well as identifying new sites along the transport corridor of the A12 and A120. The garden communities will also provide significant levels of employment growth, and both of these sites are located within key transport corridors. In terms of site retention, specific site allocation recommendations are included at table 7-1 on page 94. This has been the basis for deciding which sites should be retained.

### **HRA Screening Report/Appropriate Assessment**

Paragraph 166 of the NPPF indicates that Local Plans may require a variety of environmental assessments, including under the habitats regulations where there is a likely significant effect on a European wildlife site. This applies to sites which may not be in the local authority area.

The HRA Screening found that the Braintree District Draft Local Plan Part 2 alone will not give rise to likely significant effects on any European sites alone. However, the HRA Screening found that there is the potential for likely significant effects in combination with the Part 1 North Essex Authorities Shared Strategic Plan, with respect to human disturbance of the network of Essex Estuarine Maritime Sites.

Provided mitigation safeguards are incorporated into the Strategic Section 1 for Local Plans, and are implemented successfully, adverse effects on the integrity of the Stour and Orwell SPA/Ramsar, Hamford Water SPA/Ramsar, Colne Estuary SPA/Ramsar, Blackwater Estuary SPA/Ramsar, and Abberton Reservoir SPA/Ramsar, as a result of loss of off-site functionally linked habitat will be avoided. There is no direct spatial requirements of the HRA and AA in relation to the allocation of homes and employment in the Plan.

### **Highways and Transportation**

Paragraph 156 of the NPPF indicates that Local planning authorities should set out the strategic priorities for the area in the Local Plan. This includes policies to deliver infrastructure for transport. The highways and transportation evidence base indicates where improvements are required and enable the Council to direct development to those areas which need infrastructure improvement.

The forecast levels of growth up to 2033 are likely to put the existing road network under considerable pressure with many of the key junctions failing to provide enough capacity and limited scope for capacity enhancements. However, it has been found in this stage of work, that there are potentially a number of solutions that can be considered to reduce the transport impact of the Local Plan and that the current forecast, particularly the high growth scenario (referred to in the report as Scenario 3), is likely to be a “worst case” scenario. Alongside this, a number of ongoing studies, including strategic infrastructure projects such as the A120 between Braintree and the A12, are seeking to address key transport issues within the District.

The locations of development set out in the Local Plan and the overall spatial strategy have been formulated in a way that maximises the opportunities for travel by cycling, walking and public transport. All developments will be expected to show how these modes are prioritised within the site and contribute to improvements and links outside of the site.

### **Historic Characterisation Study**

Paragraph 156 bullet point 5 requires Local Planning authorities to include strategic policies to deliver the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape.

This project has been developed to primarily serve as a tool for Essex County Council and Braintree District to use in the creation of the Mineral Development Plan and the Local Plan for Braintree. The report reveals the sensitivity, diversity and value of the historic environment resource within the District. It facilitates the development of positive approaches to the integration of historic environment objectives into spatial planning for the District.

It is a broad brush factual assessment of the district and does not identify specific areas where development should or should not take place. It does however provide justification for the archaeological assessment policies contained in the Local Plan.

### **Landscape Capacity Assessment/Landscape Capacity Analysis**

As above paragraph 156 bullet point 5 of the NPPF requires Local Planning authorities to include strategic policies to deliver the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape.

The Landscape character assessment was originally produced in 2006. This was a broad brush examination of the character of the district. A more detailed settlement fringe assessment was carried out in 2007, and this has been up dated in 2015.

The Landscape Capacity Analysis looks in more detail at the fringes of the main towns, key service villages, and Silver End. It identifies parcels of land around these settlements and assesses them for development capacity. Each area is rated as being of low, low/medium, medium medium/high or high capacity.

The production of the Local Plan has taken into consideration the different landscape capacity when determining which sites should be allocated for development, and avoids those areas with lower landscape capacities.

Braintree (Including Cressing Tye Green, Black Notley, Rayne, Bocking and parts of High Garrett)

For Braintree 35 areas have been identified as having low capacity for development. Of these 1 is included within a growth location at BLAN114, however the capacity does not apply to the whole area as approximately 2/3 of the remaining area are low/medium to medium capacity and those areas could be identified as open space. Further areas of low capacity have been identified as green buffer in order to protect them and the function they perform as setting for adjacent villages.

For the Towerlands site the area is identified as medium capacity.

Land east of Broad Road is shown as a mixture of low/medium to medium/high capacity.

Other areas of medium capacity have been granted planning permission for residential development (17e) or employment uses (23e), or have not been allocated due to difficulty to access such as 13c, 10a and 11g.

Witham

Witham has fewer areas of medium and medium high landscape than Braintree although this could be due to the survey area being smaller. Areas of low capacity tend to be on the opposite side of the A12 to Witham, which would make development difficult. Areas of medium landscape have been allocated in the previous plan at Lodge farm (1g), but the adjacent site at Wood End Farm (1h) has now been allocated as well. Area 3g was allocated for employment and is also medium landscape capacity. Area 3a is shown as medium/high capacity and has been allocated and granted planning permission for residential development.

Halstead

In landscape terms Halstead has low capacity areas which are predominantly to the west and east. In terms of the medium/high capacity areas, 5d has an allocation as well as planning permission for residential development. One allocation is partly within a low capacity area and is allocated as it has planning permission (15/01457), with the remainder in low/medium or medium areas. The new school site at Ravens Avenue is in a medium capacity area.

Coggeshall

Allocations at Dutch Nursery and Land off Tey Road are both within areas of medium landscape capacity. Land at East Street is within a Low/Medium capacity. No allocations are within low capacity areas, which are predominantly around the river. A small area of medium/high capacity landscape is present to the south of Coggeshall however this is more remote from the village and would not be a natural extension to it.

Further work on landscape capacity has been carried out by the Neighbourhood Plan group in support of their neighbourhood plan. It shows that the area carried forward from the previous study as medium capacity continues to have medium capacity within the A120 but is low/medium outside of the A120.

#### Kelvedon

The areas around Kelvedon are pre-dominantly low/medium capacity with some areas of medium capacity toward the village inside the A12 and adjacent to the railway line.

The site allocated at Monks Farm (KEVL335) is located within a medium landscape capacity; a small extension to a care home at KEVL332 is within a low medium capacity. One area of low capacity is present along the river corridor. No sites have been allocated within this area.

#### Earls Colne

Areas within the river valley and to the west of the village are identified as low capacity areas, these areas have no sites allocated. Of the site allocated the majority are within medium/high capacity landscape areas or medium areas.

#### Hatfield Peverel

Areas of low landscape capacity are generally separated from the main built areas of Hatfield Peverel. No site allocations are proposed in these areas. 1 site is allocated around Arla dairy which is identified as being of medium landscape capacity; however the majority of the site is previously developed. An area of medium/high capacity is identified adjacent to the boundary to the south west of the village.

#### Sible Hedingham

Sible Hedingham has two main allocations at Oxford Dairy and Premdor. The Premdor site is a previously developed site within the boundary of the village, and has the benefit of planning and is under construction. Oxford Dairy is a previously developed site which is identified as being of medium capacity for development. No areas of low capacity land have been identified for development in the Plan.

#### Silver End

On area of low capacity landscape is present around Silver End, however this is separate from the existing village. The majority is of low/medium capacity with 2 medium, and 1 Medium/High capacity area. A large allocation of Western Road is within a low/medium capacity area which was granted on appeal. SILV385 is a previously developed site which has the benefit of planning permission. Other sites within the village are on previously developed land.

### **Objectively Assessed Housing Need studies**

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to meet the development needs of their areas with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless impacts outweigh the benefits of development or it would be contrary to specific policies in the NPPF.



This study is used to determine the objectively assessed housing need for the local housing market area. This is the housing figure which is incorporated into the Draft Local Plan. It has influenced the strategy as the significantly greater housing numbers identified in the study show that a new approach to housing provision is required.

### **Protected Lanes Study**

Protected Lanes are those lanes in the District which have special historic, archaeological, ecological and aesthetic value and would be harmed from significant increases in traffic. They were originally designated in the 1970's by Essex County Council.

This study looks at existing protected lanes in the district and assesses them to see whether or not they should continue to be identified as such in the Local Plan. Additional work was carried out by the Cressing Neighbourhood Plan group which has also been incorporated into the Local Plan evidence base.

The presence of a protected lane would have been considered when determining whether or not a site should be allocated. Many of the lanes in the district are located in the more rural areas and would be unaffected by development around the main towns. However there are particular areas of constraint to the north west of Witham, the area around Finchingfield, Great Bardfield and Wethersfield, areas to the south of Sudbury, and areas to the north of Halstead, and between Halstead and Braintree. One protected lane is likely to be impacted by the West of Braintree garden community, but no lanes are impacted by the west of Marks Tey proposals.

### **Strategic Housing Land Availability Study (SHLAA)**

Paragraph 159 of the NPPF sets out the requirement for local authorities to prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. It is necessary to ensure that the assumptions in the SHLAA are realistic in terms of likely availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the Plan period.

This is an inventory of sites within the district which the Council is aware of and could potentially provide housing. The SHLAA also includes an indicative brownfield register. It includes an assessment of site characteristics, and suitability of sites for development, when considering such factors as flood risk. The study is the basis for determining which sites could come forward for development through the Local Plan.

Analysis of the SHLAA shows that 3176 ha of land is available for residential development within the District on 344 sites. Greenfield and mixed greenfield/brownfield sites where the majority of land is Greenfield, making up 1124 ha, purely brownfield sites totalled 110 ha.

The SHLAA also shows that we have 89 brownfield or mainly brownfield sites with an area of 131 ha, which potentially could accommodate a total of 2383 dwellings.

232 sites are Greenfield sites with the remainder being either previously developed or a mixture of previously developed and Greenfield.

The total number of homes this could provide is 54,856, of which 41,254 are on Greenfield sites, 11,559 on predominantly Greenfield sites which include some previously developed land and 2043 homes could potentially be provided on purely previously developed sites.

The revised OAHN report recommends a target of 716 new homes per year from 2013. This takes into account a range of market signals and the need to support employment need in the District and represents uplift from the government estimated demographic starting point. If the Council continued to base its Local Plan target from 2016, this would mean a total of 12,172 new homes for the Plan Period 2016-2033 As such the SHLAA shows that Braintree District has sufficient sites available to meet its housing requirements.

### **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

One of the supporting documents which may be required under paragraph 166 is for Local Plan including a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA).

The main driver for the SFRA is the NPPF and that the documents and plans prepared by both the Environment Agency and Braintree DC are under the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act and the Flood Risk Regulations, which provide key inputs to inform the preparation of the revised SFRA and new Local Plan.

The SFRA makes 10 recommendations covering the need for a sequential approach, the retention of buffers along main rivers, among others. As the district has areas which are sequentially preferable for development in terms of flood risk (Within Zone 1), it was not necessary to allocate undeveloped Greenfield sites within flood zone 2 or higher. The more detailed stage 2 SFRA has identified 6 sites which would require additional modelling information for fluvial watercourses but this would not likely impact on delivery, and one of those sites has now been removed from the Plan.

### **Water Cycle Study**

Paragraph 156 states that Local Planning authorities should include strategic policies for the provision of waters supply and wastewater.

The WCS identifies that in total, 14 Water Recycling Centres (WRCs) will serve the proposed future development across the District. The report provides an indication of the WRCs which have available capacity and those that are likely to require changes to permits that control discharge and potentially infrastructure upgrades.

Of those 14 WRCs 4 are rated as “yellow” and would need up grades from either 2019 (Coggeshall), 2024 (Braintree) or 2026 (Bocking). White Notley has no identified capacity, and any treatment process upgrades will be required immediately. No large scale allocations are proposed at either White Notley or Coggeshall, where development impacting on Braintree and Bocking would have sufficient lead in time to ensure no negative impact on the WRC's.

## **Current Planning Situation**

### **The Main Towns**

The three main towns in the District are Braintree, Witham and Halstead. These are the largest urban areas in the District, but are nevertheless relatively small market towns in the wider context with populations of around 50,000 in Braintree, Bocking and Great Notley, 25,000 in Witham and 12,000 in Halstead. Each of these towns has a wide range of services

available, as well as local education, retail, leisure and employment opportunities which are set out in more detail below

#### Braintree

- Community Hospital.
- Significant Local Employment (Springwood Drive, Skyline).
- Town centre retail including out of centre facilities at Freeport and Braintree Retail Park.
- Education including secondary education and Braintree College.
- Full range of local services such as GP's, dentists, opticians, financial services etc.
- Good access to the strategic road network (A120) and a branch railway service to London

#### Witham

- Significant Local Employment (Eastways)
- Town Centre Retail and Services
- Education including primary and secondary education and adult education.
- Good access to the A12 and is on the main railway to London.

#### Halstead

- Local Employment
- Town Centre Retail and Services
- Education including primary and secondary education
- Local Hospital

### **Key Service Villages**

The key service villages are large villages who serve a wider rural hinterland. The ability to meet day to day needs is normally possible in a Key Service Village through the availability of early years and primary schools, primary health care facilities, convenience shopping facilities, local employment opportunities and links by public transport and road to the larger towns. Development may be considered sustainable within a Key Service Village, subject to the specific constraints and opportunities of that village.

Kelvedon and Feering are two separate villages, but functionally act as a whole, with services and facilities in one, serving the population of the other. As such for the purpose of the settlement hierarchy they are both treated as Key Service Villages, but it is important that they maintain their own identity and character.

### **Secondary Villages**

Secondary villages are those which may not serve a wider hinterland but provide the ability for some day to day needs to be met, although they lack the full range of facilities of a Key Service Villages. Development of a small scale may be considered sustainable within a Secondary Village, subject to the specific constraints and opportunities of that village.

The other villages have also played a significant role in the delivery of housing.

## **Tertiary Villages**

All other villages which have a development boundary are considered Tertiary villages. These are the smallest villages in the District and lack most of the facilities required to meet day to day needs. They often have very poor public transport links and travel by private vehicle is usually required. When considering the tests of sustainable development, these will not normally be met for development within a Tertiary Village.

## **The countryside**

All other areas of the District, including hamlets and small groups of homes, which are outside development boundaries are considered to be within the countryside. In order to protect the intrinsic beauty of the countryside development here is normally restricted to that which is support countryside uses.

A number of homes have been provided through the conversion of former agricultural buildings to residential use. Other sites which are previously developed could potentially come forward provided that their re-development/location is beneficial to the environment and they are not remote and isolated.

## **SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

The Spatial Strategy section of the Draft Local Plan categorises the District's settlements according to the size, function and service provision of each one. It then goes on to state that taking both this settlement hierarchy and the Council's analysis of opportunities and constraints into account, the broad spatial strategy should concentrate development on Braintree, planned new garden communities, Witham and the A12 corridor, and Halstead.

## **SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS**

The following options were considered through the production of the Local Plan and SA.

Option 1 – New homes should be focused on the existing towns and larger villages.

Option 2 – New homes should be built in one or more new villages.

Option 3 – New homes should be dispersed between all areas of the District.

Option 4 – New home should be built in areas where they can provide funding for major infrastructure projects such as new roads

Option 5 – New homes should be built on the existing public transport/rail network to encourage sustainable travel.

Option 6 – PDL Only Option

Option 7 – New settlement only option

Option 8 – Constrained growth option

The evidence base and SA/SEA indicate that the most appropriate strategy for meeting the needs to the district is a combination of option 1, 2, 4 and 5.

## **Options for spatial strategy considered**

### **New Homes should be focused on the existing towns and larger villages**

This option is one of the selected growth options for the Local Plan. This option allows for housing delivery to take place in the short to medium term and is essential to ensure a consistent supply of new homes over the Plan period. This option has the potential to impact on the provision of local services and add to the burden on local infrastructure, particularly if this strategy is overused. It is also difficult to retro fit new developments onto existing towns particularly where you have constraints such as historic road layouts. However these areas already have infrastructure which can be improved, as well as having local job opportunities and access to education, shops and services.

### **New homes should be built in one or more new villages**

This growth option is include in the Local Plan. For the District's longer term growth, and identified constraints around the main towns, the garden communities' option provides the District with longer term growth which would have a more minimal impact on the existing towns and villages and their associated constraints. Each settlement would develop its own set of services and infrastructure and is intended to contain sufficient options to be largely self-sustaining. The main disadvantage is the impact the development would have on previously un-developed land and the lead in time to provide infrastructure and services, meaning that for a time they would be dependent on higher order settlements.

### **New homes should be dispersed between all areas of the District**

This option is not considered to be sustainable. An equal distribution of homes would overwhelm the smaller villages, and put extra strain on local services without providing the necessary quantum of development per village to significantly improve those services. Strategic infrastructure delivery would be significantly hampered, as the development would have the same impact as other growth options but without any means to mitigate it under current s106 rules. Local and strategic roads would have to cope with the same level of growth, without the opportunity to significantly improve those networks due to a lack of a core development to support infrastructure improvements.

### **New homes should be built in areas where they can provide funding for major infrastructure projects such as new roads**

This option is included in the Local Plan. By providing growth near major infrastructure such as the trunk road and rail network, that development would be able to significantly contribute to that development. This option could potentially mean that other areas which a development would normally be expected to contribute such as affordable housing, may, due to the higher infrastructure cost, be able to provide less provision than normally expected, in order to make the development viable.

### **New homes should be built on existing public transport/rail network to encourage sustainable travel.**

This option is included in the Local Plan. Significant levels of growth are proposed along the main rail link through Essex to London. Growth is planned in the main towns and key service villages which provide easiest access to local facilities, services and employment and offer

the potential for more sustainable travel choices. This options results in smaller villages being expected to take larger growth than you would normally expect, due to their excellent transport links. This could impact on the local character and community in that area.

### **PDL Only Option**

The NPPF defines Previously Developed Land as;

*“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. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.”*

As set out earlier in the document, the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment shows that we have brownfield sites capable of accommodating 2383 new homes. This is insufficient to meet the Council's housing requirements.

Whilst other sites may become available over the Plan period, they are generally located within existing built up areas, and would be subject to a presumption in favour of development, and could also be included on the brownfield register. Not all brownfield sites are suitable for development for housing as they may be in active use, in unsustainable locations, or have other issues such as flood risk and contamination.

It would be the option which is likely to have the least impact on the countryside and landscape; however some derelict brownfield sites do provide habitats for some species of plants and animals.

It has been suggested that development could take place at Wethersfield Airbase. This site is in current use by the MOD police and other agencies, as well as being home to a reserve glider squadron. It has not been submitted as a development proposal at any time during the production of the Local Plan. The site is remote from the main transport network, and is constrained by the road network in the area. Any development on this site is likely to be post plan period.

Brownfield Register - Work has started on the formal brownfield register which will be completed by the end of the year. The number of brownfield sites available for development would be reviewed through the register and SHLAA and factored into future reviews of the Local Plan.

### **New Settlement only option**

A development strategy based on only proposing new development would not be considered appropriate as the Local Plan has to provide for new homes throughout the plan period. The particular advantages and disadvantages are discussed above. New settlements are complex and have a long lead in time before housing starts to come forward. This would leave the district vulnerable to speculation planning applications as it would be unable to

demonstrate a housing supply in the short to medium term. It is unlikely that this approach would get approved at examination, and could be legally challenged.

### **Constrained Growth Option**

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities 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. For example, those policies relating to sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives (see paragraph 119 of the NPPF) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast or within a National Park (or the Broads Authority); designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding or coastal erosion.

Braintree District does not contain any Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast or coastal erosion and does not have a National Park. It is an aspiration of the Council to extend the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley AONB into part of the northern part of the District, but no significant allocations are proposed in that area. Several SSSI exist within the district, but no development is being proposed on or adjacent to them.

Paragraph 119 of the NPPF states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14) does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined.

The area does have designated heritage assets such as listed buildings and conservation areas as well as other historic assets as set out in the Historic Characterisation study, and has assessed proposed allocations against those assets through its evidence base, and through the general consideration of site allocations.

The area does have Flood Zones, but areas not at risk of flooding are available within the local authority area, as such it is not appropriate to restrict growth on the basis of flooding.

### **Spatial Maps**

The mapping section contains maps showing the existing transport network as is and the proposed improvements expected up to 2033.

- An Environmental Constraints Map – Shows areas of the district where it would not be possible to accommodate development due to environmental constraints such as flooding, and wildlife protection areas. It also shows landscape capacity around the main towns, and service villages.
- A transport network maps which shows the existing network and area where improvements are proposed.
- And finally a Settlements and Services – Shows the settlements and what services are available in each.

## **Conclusion**

The evidence base highlighted above shows that whilst the District does have constraints, those constraints are not unsurmountable when it comes to delivering the homes needed for the district.

The mapping section shows the areas of environmental constraint which should be avoided, and when compared to the proposed development strategy and allocations, that the most sensitive areas have been avoided.

Through careful consideration of all the development options and by avoiding those areas most sensitive to the impacts of development, the Council's preferred special strategy is considered to be the best option for growth in this area.

It is important that the evidence base supporting the Local Plan is kept up to date, and through future reviews of the Plan, the most appropriate areas for development should continue to be able to providing housing in the foreseeable future.

## **Appendix - Committee Dates and Subjects**



The table below shows which pieces of evidence base, draft plan inset maps and policies went to which committee.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Subjects</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>12/01/15</b>	<b>Local Plan Issues and Scope Consultation Document- For Public Consultation SA/SEA Assessment Local Development Scheme</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>11/06/15</b>	<b>Local Plan Issues and Scoping – Consultation Responses Development Boundaries Review Methodology</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>08/07/15</b>	<b>Landscape Capacity Analysis SA/SEA – Consultation Responses Duty to Cooperate Statement</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>07/09/15</b>	<b>Objectively Assessed Housing Need Employment Land Needs Assessment Affordable Housing Viability Assessment</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>11/11/15</b>	<b>Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) Local Plan Timetable and Site Selection Update</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>02/12/15</b>	<b>Retail Study Update 2015 Draft Development Management Policies – A Strong Economy, Shops and Services, and Creating High Quality Spaces</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>14/01/16</b>	<b>Draft Development Management Policies – Homes, Transport and Infrastructure, Community Facilities and Protecting the Environment</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>17/02/16</b>	<b>Garden Communities Update Strategic Housing Market Assessment update – Affordable Housing Needs</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>14/03/16</b>	<b>Braintree District Draft Local Plan – Housing Target, Broad Spatial Strategy, Historic Parks and Gardens.</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>16/03/16</b>	<b>Draft Village Site Allocations – Alphamstone, Audley End, Belchamp Otten, Belchamp St Paul, Birdbrook, Borley, Lamarsh, Middleton, Ovington, Pentlow, Stambourne Chapel End Way and Stambourne Dyers End, Great and Little Henny, Tilbury Juxta Clare, Twinstead, Wickham St Paul, Great Bardfield, Finchingfield, Cornish Hall End, Panfield, Ridgewell, Steeple Bumpstead, White Colne.</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>13/04/16</b>	<b>Draft Village Site Allocations – Witham, Rivenhall and Rivenhall End, Kelvedon Park, Hatfield Peverel, Nounsley, Belchamp Walter, Bures Hamlet, Gestingthorpe, Helions Bumpstead, Great Maplestead, Little Maplestead, Little Yeldham, North End, Pebmarsh, Sturmer, Sturmer West, Toppesfield.</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>09/05/16</b>	<b>Proposed Allocations – Braintree, Great Notley, Black Notley, Tye Green Cressing and Cressing, Rayne, Wethersfield, Blackmore End, Bradwell, Sible Hedingham, Castle Hedingham, Stisted, Shalford, Shalford Church End, Coggeshall,</b>

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Subjects</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-committee</b>	<b>25/05/16</b>	<p><b>Proposed Allocations – Halstead, Greenstead, Kelvedon and Feering, Earls Colne and Earls Colne Airfield, White Colne, Ashen, Bulmer and Bulmer Tye, Colne Engaine, Gosfield, Silver End, Great Yeldham, Terling and Fairstead, Foxearth, Liston, Hatfield Peverel, Toppesfield, Pebmarsh, Great Maplestead, Stisted.</b></p> <p><b>Braintree District Draft Local Plan – Garden Communities.</b></p>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>26/05/16</b>	<b>Braintree District Draft Local Plan for Consultation Braintree District Local Plan – Proposed consultation strategy</b>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>12/07/16</b>	<p><b>Garden Communities – Evidence base document</b></p> <p><b>Heritage Assets Impact Assessment</b></p> <p><b>Highways Studies</b></p> <p><b>Community Halls Study</b></p>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>05/10/16</b>	<p><b>Local Development Scheme</b></p> <p><b>Outcome of Consultation Strategy</b></p> <p><b>Consultation Responses – Alphamstone, Birdbrook, Borley, Liston, Toppesfield, Belchamp Otten, Belchamp Walter, Belchamp St Paul, Colne Engaine, Foxearth, Gestingthorpe, Audley End, Helions Bumpstead, Lamarsh, Little Maplestead, Middleton, Ovington, Pentlow, Sturmer, Fairstead, Twinstead, Great and Little Henny.</b></p>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>31/10/16</b>	<p><b>Consultation Responses – Ashen, Bulmer, Bulmer Tye, Gainsford End, Gosfield, Great Maplestead, Great Yeldham, Little Yeldham, Panfield, Pebmarsh, Ridgewell, Shalford, Shalford Church End, Silver End, Stambourne Chapel End Way, Stambourne Dyers End, Steeple Bumpstead, Terling, Tilbury Juxta Clare, Wickham St Paul.</b></p> <p><b>Amendments to Vision and Objectives and Design and Heritage Section.</b></p>
<b>Local Plan Sub-committee</b>	<b>10/11/16</b>	<p><b>Objectively Assessed Need Study 2016 update</b></p> <p><b>Consultation Responses – Stisted, Sible Hedingham, Rivenhall, Rivenhall End, Rayne, Castle Hedingham, Bradwell, Pattiswick,</b></p> <p><b>Amendments to Sustainable Access for all, parking provision, protected lanes.</b></p>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>28/11/16</b>	<p><b>Consultation Responses – Coggeshall, Surrex Hamlet, Earls Colne and White Colne West, Earls Colne and White Colne East, Earls Colne Airfield, Finchingfield, Cornish Hall End, Great Bardfield, Bardfield Saling, Black Notley, Great Notley, Greenstead Green, Wethersfield, Blackmore End, White Notley, Faulkbourne.</b></p> <p><b>Amendments to Introduction, background and</b></p>

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Subjects</b>
		what happens next section, Spatial Strategy, Glossary.
<b>Local Plan Sub-committee</b>	<b>15/12/16</b>	<p><b>Consultation Responses – Bures Hamlet, Braintree, Great Notley, Cressing, Tye Green Cressing, Witham, Rivenhall, Hatfield Peverel, Nounsley, Great Saling, Fairstead.</b></p> <p><b>Amendments to Broadband, Homes, Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage.</b></p>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>15/02/17</b>	<p><b>Revised Local Development Scheme,</b></p> <p><b>Consultation Responses – Halstead,</b></p> <p><b>Amendments to Employment, Equestrian facilities, Education, community facilities, an inclusive environment.</b></p> <p><b>Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.</b></p>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>09/03/17</b>	<p><b>Consultation Responses – Castle Hedingham Recreation Area.</b></p> <p><b>Amendments to - health and Wellbeing Impact Assessments, Protecting and Enhancing Natural Resources, Minimising pollution and safeguarding from hazards.</b></p> <p><b>Water Cycle Study</b></p> <p><b>Community Halls Study</b></p>
<b>Local Plan Sub-Committee</b>	<b>12/04/17</b>	<p><b>Consultation Responses – Feering, Kelvedon and Halstead,</b></p> <p><b>Amendments to – Green buffers, Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpersons policy, affordable housing, retail and town centres. Natural Environment Chapter</b></p> <p><b>Proposed Consultation Strategy</b></p>
<b>Local Plan Sub-committee</b>	<b>16/05/17</b>	<p><b>Responses to consultation Shared Section 1 Strategic Plans for North Essex.</b></p> <p><b>Consultation responses – Economy, Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpersons, Road infrastructure, Open Space Sport and recreation, homes, housing trajectory, implementation and monitoring changes.</b></p> <p><b>Evidence base - Open Spaces, Gypsy and Traveller Update, Habitats Regulation Assessment, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Equalities Impact Assessment</b></p>

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Subjects</b>
		<b>SA/SEA</b>
	<b>11/07/17</b>	<b>Evidence base for publication draft Local Plan – Viability Assessment, Movement and Access Study.</b>

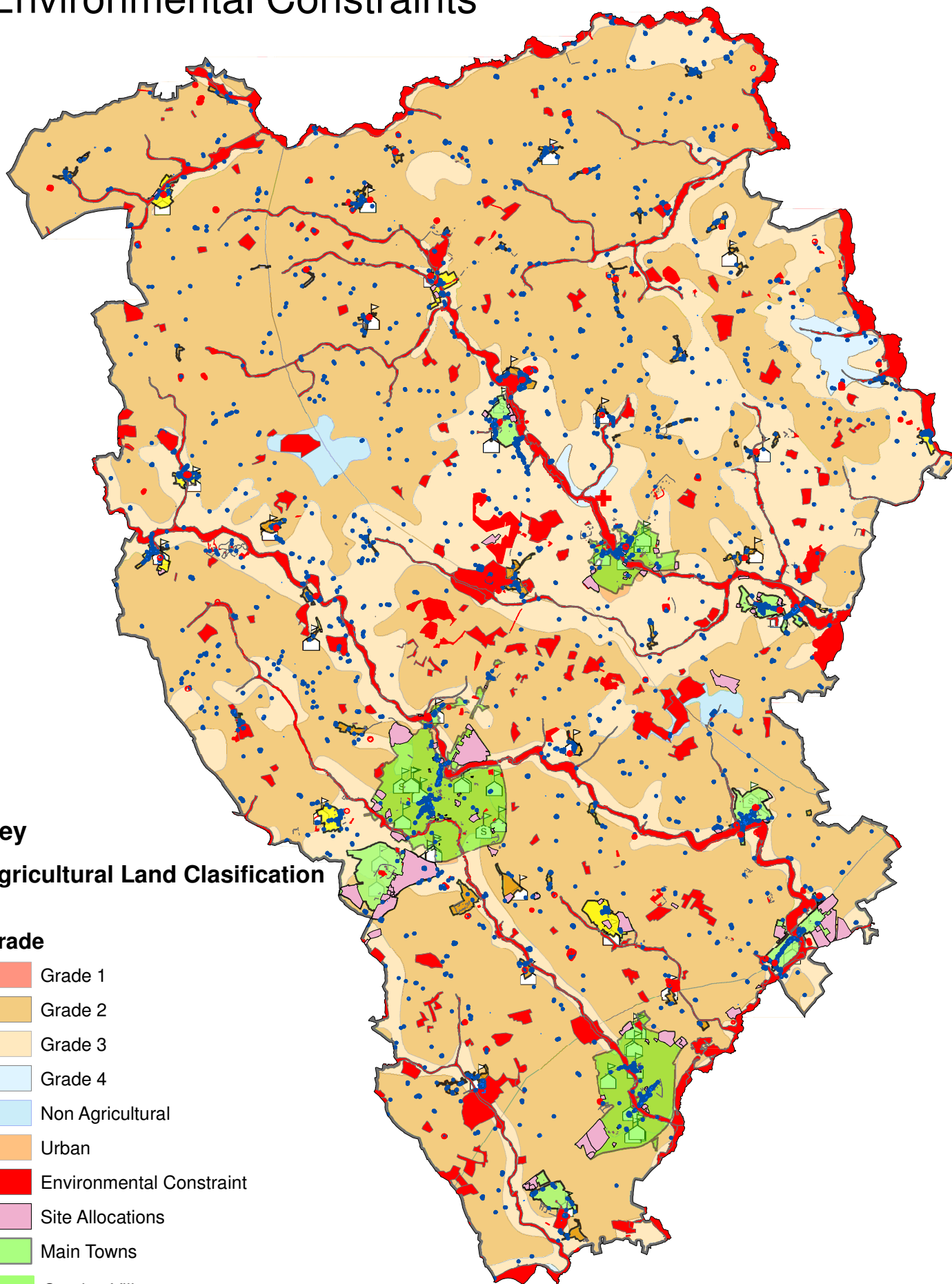
# Environmental Constraints



## Key Agricultural Land Clasification

### Grade

- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Non Agricultural
- Urban
- Environmental Constraint
- Site Allocations
- Main Towns
- Service Villages
- Second Tier Villages
- Third Tier Villages



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# Landscape Capacity

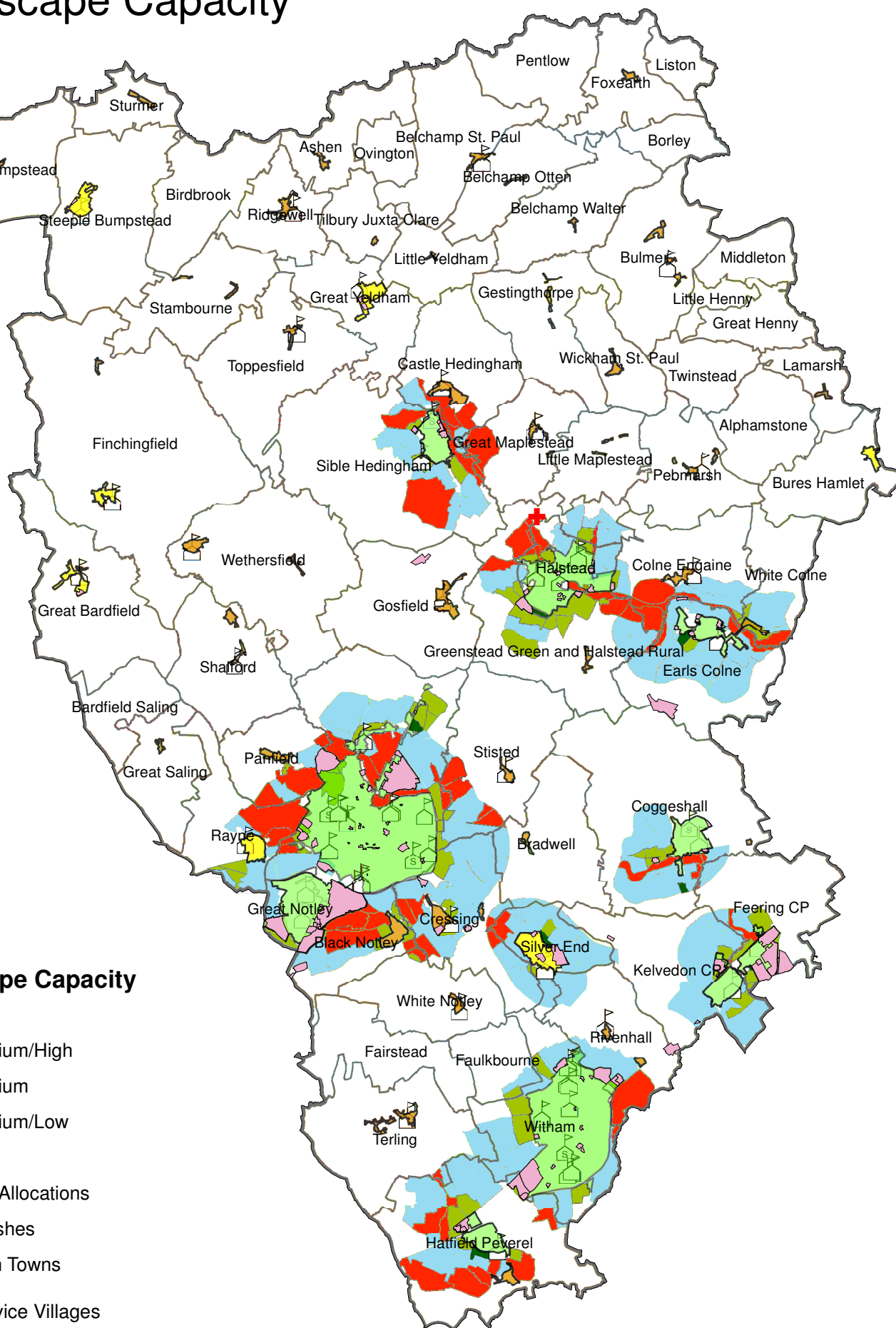


## Key

### Landscape Capacity

#### LAYER

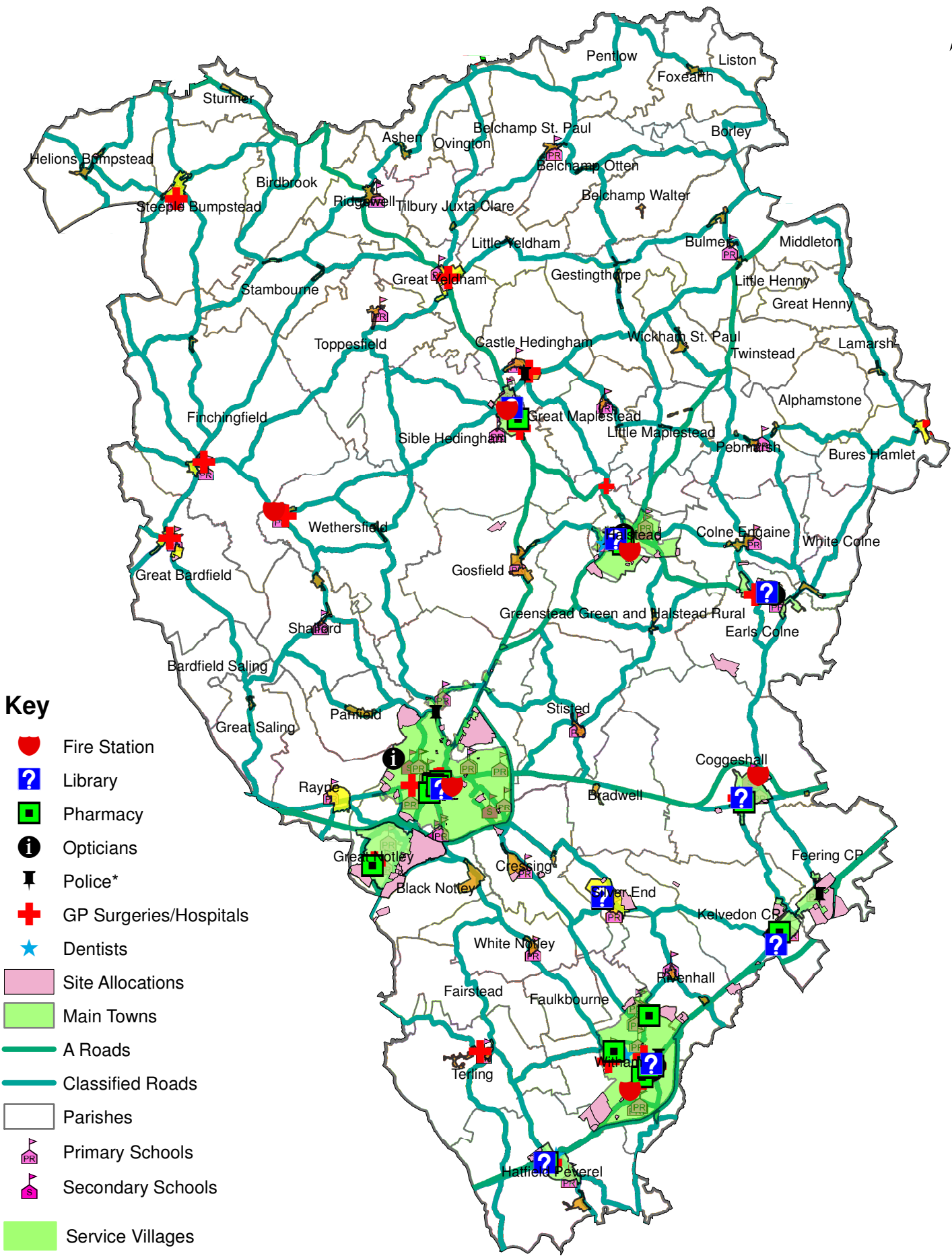
- Medium/High
- Medium
- Medium/Low
- Low
- Site Allocations
- Parishes
- Main Towns
- Service Villages
- Second Tier Villages
- Third Tier Villages



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# Settlements and Services



- Key**
- Fire Station
  - Library
  - Pharmacy
  - Opticians
  - Police\*
  - GP Surgeries/Hospitals
  - Dentists
  - Site Allocations
  - Main Towns
  - A Roads
  - Classified Roads
  - Parishes
  - Primary Schools
  - Secondary Schools
  - Service Villages
  - Second Tier Villages
  - Third Tier Villages

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\*Please note that some police stations have now closed.

# Transport Network

