

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PANEL

AGENDA



THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Date: Wednesday 7th May 2008

Time – 6.00pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, Causeway House, Bocking End, Braintree

Membership:

Councillor Miss L Barlow	Councillor H J Messenger
Councillor G Butland	Councillor Lady Newton
Councillor N R H O Harley	Councillor Mrs W D Scattergood
Councillor M C M Lager	Councillor Miss M Thorogood
Councillor N G McCrea	Councillor R G Walters

Members are requested to attend this meeting, to transact the following business: -

PUBLIC SESSION

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Declarations of Interests.**
 - (a) To declare the existence and nature of any 'personal' or 'personal and prejudicial' interests relating to items on the agenda having regard to paragraphs 8 to 12 (inclusive) of the Code of Conduct for Members in Part 5 of the Constitution and having taken appropriate advice (where necessary) before the meeting.
 - (b) Any Member with a 'personal and prejudicial' interest to indicate whether he/she intends to make representations in accordance with paragraph 12 (2) of the Code of Conduct as part of Question Time.
- 3. Minutes.** To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel held on 30th January 2008 and the minutes of the Annual General meeting held on 21st April 2008 (both previously circulated).
- 4. Question Time.** (See paragraph below)
- 5. Draft Core Strategy Preferred Options For Consultation With Key Stakeholders.** To receive a working draft of the Core Strategy Preferred Options (Report attached)
- 6. Urgent Business.** To consider any matter, which in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

7. To agree the exclusion of the public and press for the consideration of the following items for the reasons set out in Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972.

At the time of compiling the agenda there were no items for inclusion in this part of the agenda.

PRIVATE SESSION

8. **Urgent Business.** To consider any matter, which in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered in private by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

QUESTION TIME

Immediately after the Minutes of the previous meeting have been approved there will be a period of up to 30 minutes when members of the public can speak about Council business or other matters of local concern. During this period Councillors who have declared a personal and prejudicial interest in any item of business on the agenda may also speak as permitted by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. Whilst members of the public can remain to observe the whole of the public part of the meeting, Councillors with a personal and prejudicial interest must withdraw whilst the item of business in question is being considered. Members of the public wishing to speak should contact the Council's Member Resources Section on 01376 552525 or e-mail melanie.ward@braintree.gov.uk prior to the meeting. The Council's "Question Time" leaflet explains the procedure and copies of this may be obtained at the Council's offices at Braintree, Witham and Halstead.

If you require any further information relating to this agenda or wish to forward your apologies for absence, please contact Melanie Ward on (01376) 551414 Extn: 2616.

The last page of this Agenda is numbered ii.

DRAFT CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR CONSULTATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS**Agenda Item 5**

Contact Details: Eleanor Dash
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Background Papers: - Regional Spatial Strategy, Urban Capacity Study, Employment Land Review, Annual Monitoring Report, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Issues and Options Report.

Financial Implications: - Yes

Equalities Implications: - Yes

Legal Implications: - No

Options: As set out in the report.

Risks: Core Strategy could be found unsound.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out a working draft of the Core Strategy Preferred Options for approval by Members, which will be used as a basis for discussion with key stakeholders, such as the Environment Agency, Highways Agency and Go-East.

The report includes the strategic spatial objectives and drafts of the 4 key themes as follows:

Theme 1 – Sustainable Development

Theme 2 – Our Environment

Theme 3 – Our Economy

Theme 4 – Our Communities and Services

The Core Strategy Preferred Options Document will also include an introductory section, which will set out a District Profile and the Vision for the Future.

There will also be a Theme 5 - Delivering our Strategy. These sections are still in preparation.

This draft is still work in progress and there are some gaps. However the four themes set out the key elements of the proposed strategy and should be adequate for meaningful consultation with the key stakeholders.

DECISION

It is recommended that Members approve the working draft Core Strategy Preferred Options as the basis for discussion with key stakeholders.

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BRAINTREE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

DRAFT CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR CONSULTATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

LDF PANEL – 7TH MAY 2008

- **Strategic Spatial Objectives**
- **Theme 1 - Sustainable Development and Spatial Strategy**
- **Theme 2 – Our Environment**
- **Theme 3 – Our Economy**
- **Theme 4 – Our Communities and Services**

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DRAFT CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS FOR CONSULTATION WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

STRATEGIC SPATIAL OBJECTIVES

Spatial Objectives

The Core Strategy will seek to fulfill the vision for the District by achieving the following set of objectives. These objectives reflect the Council's corporate aims and objectives and also those of the Community Strategy. They need to encompass the range of issues necessary for the creation of a spatial plan for the District and are specifically directed towards the District's needs and will form the basis for the policies that follow.

1. To ensure that all development is sustainable, enabling people to satisfy their basic needs as far as possible within the District, and continue to enjoy a high quality of life, without compromising the quality of life of future generations;
2. To try to eliminate, or at least reduce, the adverse impact of society on the environment, and respond positively and effectively to the implications of climate change at the local level;
3. To secure developments that make the minimum use of scarce natural resources, both in construction and everyday use.
4. To accord with national and regional planning policies, and in particular, accommodate the future housing and employment growth requirements of the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy;
5. To reduce the need for travel, and make it safer and easier for the community to travel to jobs and key services by improving sustainable forms of transport such as public transport, walking and cycling;
6. To support thriving and sustainable communities by locating development, especially housing, where it will enable people to access jobs and key services, such as education, training, healthcare, recreation and other facilities;
7. To meet the housing needs of all sections of the community by providing an adequate amount, range and quality of accommodation, in particular "affordable housing", and that required for special needs;
8. To support and provide for the required growth and diversity of the District's economy both at the main towns and in rural areas, in ways which are compatible with environmental objectives, deliver increased prosperity for the whole community, and encourage people to live and work locally;
9. To maintain and develop our vibrant and prosperous main towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead, by encouraging new development and regeneration schemes that support their function as major service centres with a range of good quality jobs, businesses, shops and services that meet the needs of local people and the wider sub-region;

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10. To promote and secure high quality, environmentally friendly design in all aspects of new developments, in order to create sustainable, attractive, safe and healthy places in which to live, work and play.
11. To protect and enhance the unique historic character and identity of the district , by ensuring that new developments are appropriate in terms of scale , location and character to their local environment, and that our built heritage is not irretrievably lost or damaged;
12. To protect the countryside, and improve and manage the diversity of wildlife and habitats;
13. To provide accessible and varied opportunities for leisure and recreational activities in order to promote healthy lifestyles and social inclusion;
14. To protect and improve open spaces within our towns and villages

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THEME 1

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SPATIAL STRATEGY

The principle of “sustainability” is at the heart of the national planning system. This theme sets out our draft policies on how it can be applied to Braintree District. These policies will guide all the others in this Core Strategy and in future planning documents.

PART 1

"SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES"

OUR EVIDENCE BASE SUMMARY

National policies

- The “UK Sustainable Development Strategy” and “Sustainable Communities: Homes for all” set out the governments guiding principles for securing a sustainable future.
- PPS1 requires “sustainability” to be at the heart of all planning strategies. This is reinforced by all other PPS/Gs

East of England Plan policies

- Policy SS1 requires all planning strategies to reduce carbon emissions, minimise climate change, maximise sustainable living and respect environmental limits and mitigate damage.

Statutory stakeholder comments

- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- English Heritage
- Highways Agency

The LSP Strategy

These policies support objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 of the Community Strategy Vision

BDC Corporate Strategies

These policies support the following Corporate Strategies:

- Braintree Corporate Strategy and Action Plan.
- Nottingham Declaration Climate Change. The Council has formally signed and adopted this declaration which is intended to underpin its corporate strategies

The Issues and Options Report feedback summary

- Support for including sustainable development and climate change in the overall strategy for the district.

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Relevant technical studies

- Landscape Character Assessment
- Water Cycle Study
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Appropriate Assessment
- Transport Study

Strategic Spatial Objectives

These policies support SSOs Nos 4, 5 and 8

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

Promoting and delivering a sustainable future

National Policy Statement PPS1 sets out how sustainable development underpins good planning. It says:

Sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning. At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for future generations. A widely used definition was drawn up by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The Government has set out four aims for sustainable development:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- Effective protection of the environment
- The prudent use of resources; and
- The maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.

PPS1 also sets out how the new spatial planning system should contribute to the delivery of sustainability and sustainable development.

“Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning to bring together and integrate policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the nature of places and how they can function.”

These statements show how promotion of "sustainable development" and lifestyles are now the key issues for planning globally and nationally and regionally.

It is now generally accepted that the historic trends and solutions for locating and designing development cannot continue in the face of climate change and the depletion of natural resources.

At the District level the Council is committed to promoting a sustainable future through its corporate strategies, and this is also becoming enshrined in the LSP Community Strategy.

The primary function of the Core Strategy must therefore be to address these issues at the local level to help meet the country's commitments to tackling them. The promotion and delivery of a sustainable future for the District is therefore at the heart of the plan. All other strategies policies flow from it.

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Sustainability can be promoted at all levels.

At the very detailed level of new buildings, the use of renewable or less environmentally damaging materials and making them more energy efficient can help both the occupiers and users of those buildings and the Government's national policy objectives.

However, sustainability is not just about buildings and development. Changing our lifestyles so that we act in a way that does less harm to the local, national and global environment is also becoming a central objective of many other strategies as well as planning.

For example, it is now accepted that our travel choices have a significant impact on the environment both locally and globally. Placing the jobs, services and facilities we need close to where most people live, can help to reduce travel to work and encourage us to be healthier by making walking and cycling easier. Making sure that everyone has the services they need near by can also promote community spirit and a feeling of inclusion.

Putting most new development in the towns and larger villages can help achieve these objectives.

The District has extensive rural areas so we must recognise the needs of those who live in our villages to access the facilities they need as locally as possible.

However, this must be balanced by protection of the environment, which is a central feature of sustainability. Our many historic villages and extensive attractive countryside makes this especially important in Braintree.

The achievement of sustainability will not however always be directly through the planning process. Many agencies and organisations, large and small, public and private, will be involved and all should be directed towards the same overall goals. For example promoting healthy lifestyles, high quality developments and social inclusion, can help the strategies of the health service, social services and the police.

The Core Strategy as a whole, and this policy in particular, should therefore seek to influence the Council, its partners and other agencies in promoting and delivering the concept of sustainability through their own future strategies, and day to day decisions on managing their sites, buildings, and operations.

We think this policy needs to :

- *promote and secure sustainable forms of development which are sited in the most suitable locations,*
- *protect , and where possible, improve the environment,*
- *deliver the types of development to provide for the needs of the community, including housing, jobs, recreation and services,*
- *contribute towards community well-being and social inclusion,*
- *promote sustainable lifestyles*

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PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

PROMOTING AND DELIVERING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

1 THE COUNCIL AND ITS PARTNERS WILL SEEK TO ENSURE THAT ALL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS, THE MANAGEMENT OF LAND AND BUILDINGS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES, CONTRIBUTE TO (OR AT LEAST ARE NOT HARMFUL TO) THE PROMOTION AND DELIVERY OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISTRICT AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, WIDER REGIONAL, NATIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIES.

2 IN PARTICULAR THE CORE STRATEGY WILL REQUIRE:

a) THE CREATION OF LOCALLY DISTINCTIVE, SUSTAINABLE, SAFE, HEALTHY, VIBRANT AND SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES

b) THE PROVISION OF JOBS, SERVICES, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO MEET DEFINED FUTURE NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT

c) NEW DEVELOPMENTS THAT CREATE ATTRACTIVE, HIGH QUALITY PLACES WITH AN APPROPRIATE MIX OF USES, PROTECT AND WHERE POSSIBLE ENHANCE THE LOCAL NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS, AND MINIMISE THE USE OF RESOURCES AND THE CAUSES AND IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The promotion of sustainable development is required by legislation, most importantly in national and regional policies. These set out the context within which the Core Strategy must be prepared, and with which it must generally conform.

A first alternative approach could however be to amend the policy by loosening the wording in Part 2 from a REQUIREMENT for the principles set out to be met to “SEEKING TO SECURE” that they are met. This would make the policy more flexible and less prescriptive. It would enable future more detailed policies to be more flexible but may result in the Council being less able to deliver the fundamental objective of sustainable development.

A second alternative would be to delete the policy altogether on the grounds that the principles set out are adequately covered by national and regional policies. However it is felt that the principles are so fundamental to the CS that they should be fully articulated at the outset of the plan. They also set out a clear commitment from all partners to promote the concept of sustainability and deliver sustainable development in their own plans and strategies.

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PART 2

"SPATIAL PRINCIPLES"

OUR EVIDENCE BASE SUMMARY

National policies

- Planning Policy Statements generally promote the concept of sustainable development (including the use of previously developed (brownfield) land wherever possible) through the planning of towns and villages, and by making sure they function in the best way to serve the community and protect the environment. The future development of each place should be based on the role it plays and can be expected to play in the future of the district as whole.

East of England Plan policies

- Policies SS3 and SS4 set out a broad hierarchy (in order of importance) for the main places in the region. These are:

Key Centres –such as Chelmsford and Colchester

Market Towns – such as Braintree, Witham and Halstead

Key Service Centres – the larger villages that have a range of services to cater for local areas and transport links to large towns.

The policies say that development (housing, employment and services) should be located at those places appropriate to its scale and type.

The LSP Strategy

These policies support objective 6 of the Draft Community Strategy Vision

BDC Corporate Strategies

These policies support the following Corporate Strategies:

- Braintree Corporate Strategy and Action Plan.

The Issues and Options Report feedback

- Most support for options 1& 2- using existing commitments and new urban concentration at Braintree, Witham and Halstead.
- Some support for development in larger villages
- Some suggestions for sites in small villages.
- Three proposals for new settlements to east and west of district
- Mostly public opposition to the new settlements
- Support for development to south and west of Braintree
- No preferences for direction of development at Witham
- Support for urban infilling for Halstead.
- Lack of support for locating development to assist with new infrastructure.
- Support for locating new housing close to existing services /facilities such schools and jobs wherever possible.

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Studies summary

- The employment land/economic studies, retail study, and Landscape Character Assessment all generally support the location of jobs and services close to homes and/or the concentration of new development at the main towns and larger villages. More details are set out in the “economy” and “environment” themes
- Rural Services Surveys 2005/8 show that 6 villages have ALL of the services and features needed to be classed as Key Service Villages - Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon, Silver End, Sible Hedingham

Strategic Spatial Objectives

- These policies support SSOs Nos 4, 5 and 8.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The concentration of most new development in or at Braintree, Witham and Halstead would be generally positive in its impacts on the achievement of sustainable development especially with regard to the impacts on the environment, although Halstead is sensitive in that regard. However, there are issues regarding the range of facilities and jobs offered by Halstead and to an extent Witham, should significant amounts of housing be located there.

Dispersing development across the district would have negative impacts on the environment, the ability of larger centres to support local services and the mismatch of housing to jobs in villages.

A new settlement would have adverse impact on the environment without sufficient scale to provide all the services needed by its new residents. It would also limit the development of services in existing centres. This would be likely to increase car travel.

Linking development to proposed infrastructure could improve the delivery of specific benefits but would have negative impacts on the environment. It would also be likely to be in unsustainable locations and have adverse impacts on existing centres and services.

Spatial Principles-Making Sustainable Places

In order to deliver the "Sustainability Principles ", making sure new development is in the most suitable locations is vital.

The Adopted Local Plan does not set out any hierarchy of settlements, simply defining boundaries within which development will be located. Given the national and regional policies and the requirement to produce a "Spatial Strategy" with a “hierarchy” of places, we do not think the CS can continue with that approach.

A formal hierarchy of settlements would be the basis for deciding on the distribution of development and services throughout the district.

It is important to note that this Spatial Strategy includes all forms of development and not just housing, indeed the balance of future need in the District is towards employment, services and environmental protection / enhancement, rather than just large scale housing delivery.

The requirement to support the principles of sustainable development means that developments cannot be considered in isolation, and must be planned to make the best contribution to future sustainability.

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Overall Spatial Principles-The Hierarchy of Places

The Main Towns

Given national and regional policies, the evidence base, the results of the consultation, and our objectives, the most appropriate spatial option is the concentration of most new development at the main towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead. Much new development can initially be accommodated within the existing urban areas of all three towns (“urban capacity”), but development of land outside urban areas (“greenfield” land) will be needed during the plan period.

The “urban areas” will eventually be defined by the Site Allocations plan, but for the purposes of this CS consultation we are including the areas shown in the adopted local plan for Halstead, Witham and Braintree, including Great Notley and Bocking Church Street.

Key Service Villages

To accord with national and regional policies and also recognise the outputs of the evidence base and consultation, there is a need to secure some necessary development in villages. This will help to protect and if possible improve local services and job opportunities. Policies should reflect that need, whilst remaining sustainable overall.

The future role of the other places in the District therefore needs to be decided. This will help to guide where different types and scale of development should be located and where new services should be provided and/or existing ones retained.

Key service villages could provide the opportunity to secure some small scale market housing, local needs affordable housing, keep or create local jobs, and improve services and facilities.

Taking the criteria set out in the East of England Plan, the outputs of the Rural Services Survey, and the Urban Capacity Study, it is clear that the places that most closely meet the definition of a Key Service Centre are:

Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon, Silver End, and Sible Hedingham

However, these villages vary considerably in size, character and location, so they may benefit from slightly different approaches to future development. For example, some may offer much greater opportunities for local employment, the regeneration of underused or vacant sites, or as a focus for tourism development

Other villages could be considered as Key Service Villages but none of the other villages meet the primary criteria in the RSS.

The Other Villages

The remaining villages in the district perform a much more local service role-although they are no less important to local people for that. Many villages are however relatively isolated from the main towns and have few services and poor public transport. These factors make new development difficult to substantiate.

However, those villages that are already defined in the Local Plan by village envelopes may be suitable for limited infill development. The envelopes will be subject to detailed review in the Site Allocations plan

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It may also be that some villages would benefit from having envelopes removed, because they cannot now be considered sustainable, or new villages selected for envelopes because they may now be acceptable for some small amounts of development.

Some may also be suitable for affordable housing schemes subject to location and local need. A few villages also contain sites that are suitable for regeneration and will provide the opportunity for some additional mixed use development.

The Countryside

Development in the countryside is very limited by national and regional policies. The essential character of the district is also set by its extensive undeveloped areas of open farmland, woodland and isolated clusters of development.

However this very character may allow for some types of development that may be of positive benefit to the local economy and community and to the overall quality of the landscape and natural environment. Leisure and tourism uses may be appropriate in some locations, and there may be opportunities to promote sustainable farming and small-scale business uses offering local employment, perhaps by the reuse of redundant farm buildings. These could in turn encourage landscape enhancement, planting, and the creation of new or upgraded habitats for wildlife. All would however need to be sensitive and not result in producing unsustainable side effects such as heavy car traffic generation or obtrusive development.

The countryside also has a wider function of keeping gaps between the main towns and villages. This stops development spreading too far and both harming the environment and becoming unsustainable.

We think that:

- *Most new development should be concentrated in or at the main towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead.*
- *More limited development to serve the local area, or deal with specific local issues such as the regeneration of important sites, can be located in or at the key service Villages*
- *Only very limited development should be located in the other villages*
- *Certain types of development may be acceptable in the countryside but only if it would be of positive benefit to the local economy, ensure delivery of needed local services and make positive contributions to the overall quality of the landscape and natural environment.*
- *Countryside between the main towns, key service villages and nearby villages should be kept undeveloped (retained) to stop these places linking together.*

PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE REQUIRED SERVICES AND FACILITIES, SHALL BE BROADLY LOCATED IN ACCORD WITH THE HIERARCHY OF PLACES SET OUT BELOW;

1 THE MAIN TOWNS OF BRAINTREE, WITHAM AND HALSTEAD

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2 THE KEY SERVICE VILLAGES OF:

- **COGGESHALL, EARLS COLNE, HATFIELD PEVEREL, KELVEDON, SILVER END, AND SIBLE HEDINGHAM**

3 OTHER DEFINED SMALL VILLAGES

4 THE COUNTRYSIDE

ALL DEVELOPMENT SHALL BE APPROPRIATE IN SCALE AND TYPE TO THE LOCATION IN THE HIERACHY AND SHALL NOT RESULT IN OR LEAD TO THE COALESCENCE OF SETTLEMENTS

ALTERNATIVE POLICY APPROACHES

The creation of hierarchies of places is an important part of national and regional policies. They help to ensure that development is located in the most sustainable locations to the benefit of the residents, the economy and the environment.

The Main Towns

Given the rejection by the Government of proposals for eco-town new settlements in Braintree District as a means of delivering the bulk of new development within the District, we think that the designation of the main towns for that purpose is the most viable option. Any other approach would conflict with national and regional policies.

The Key Service Villages

The designation of key service villages also meets regional policies. However there may be merit in considering other places, such as Great Yeldham and Steeple Bumpstead, for designation as key service villages, but these options are likely to be very limited, given the size, character and isolation of many of the villages in the District.

Another alternative may be to reduce the number of key service villages to reduce the clustering effect around the south-east part of the District.

The Other Villages

Allowing a higher status and hence more development in other small villages has superficial attractions in supporting local services and providing affordable housing and local jobs. However, to allow for full dispersal would reinforce unsustainable development and would be contrary to national and regional policies. To introduce another level in the hierarchy would be unnecessarily complex and could lead to confusion.

The draft policy sets out that the scale and type of development must accord with the location in the hierarchy. This is to ensure that development is appropriate to its location. Two alternatives would be to:

- Not set out such a requirement
- Loosen or tighten those broad requirements.

We think that either approach would risk lack of clarity in the policy and reduce its effectiveness.

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THEME 2

OUR ENVIRONMENT

PART 1

OUR EVIDENCE BASE SUMMARY

National policies summary

East of England Plan policies summary

- Plans should preserve, enhance and positively manage the natural and built environments
- All new development will be of the highest standards

The LSP Strategy

These policies support objectives 7 and 8 of the Community Strategy Vision.

BDC Corporate Strategies

These policies support the following Corporate Strategies:

The Issues and Options Report Feedback Summary

- Support for protection of our heritage and countryside
- Support for low energy building and renewable energy

Studies Summary

- Landscape Character Assessment
 - Braintree has high quality landscape that should be protected.

Other Relevant Strategies

- Essex Biodiversity Action Plan

PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY WILL BE TO:

PROTECT, ENHANCE, AND MANAGE THE QUALITY AND DIVERSITY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND HABITATS OF THE DISTRICT, ESPECIALLY THOSE DESIGNATED FOR THEIR NATURE CONSERVATION VALUE AND LANDSCAPES IDENTIFIED AS BEING OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE (IN THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER SPD) AND ON THE KEY DIAGRAM AND PROPOSALS MAP.

AVOID THE LOSS OF THE BEST AND MOST VERSATILE AGRICULTURAL LAND.

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PROTECT, ENHANCE, AND MANAGE THE NATURAL AND INFORMAL OPEN SPACES ACROSS THE DISTRICT, AS IDENTIFIED IN THE SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES DPD AND THE COUNCIL'S OPEN SPACE STRATEGY.

ENSURE THAT DEVELOPMENTS (INCLUDING THE USE OF LAND) DO NOT HAVE AN UNACCEPTABLE IMPACT ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE DISTRICT AND BEYOND FROM:

- **ALL TYPES OF POLLUTION**
- **EXCESSIVE USE OF WATER**
- **THE GENERATION OF WASTE**
- **NOISE AND OTHER FORMS OF DISTURBANCE**

PART 2

PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY WILL BE TO:

- **PROMOTE & SECURE THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE STANDARDS OF DESIGN AND LAYOUT IN ALL NEW DEVELOPMENT, SO AS TO:**
- **RESPECT AND RESPOND TO THE LOCAL CONTEXT, ESPECIALLY IN THE DISTRICT'S HISTORIC VILLAGES, URBAN CONSERVATION AREAS AND AREAS OF HIGHEST LANDSCAPE VALUE.**
- **CREATE ENVIRONMENTS WHICH ARE SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE, AND WHICH WILL CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN ALL TOWNS AND VILLAGES.**
- **SECURE THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY, BUILDING MATERIALS AND ENERGY EFFICIENT DESIGN, AND TO BE FLEXIBLY DESIGNED TO MEET CHANGING FUTURE NEEDS.**
- **PROMOTE THE SYMPATHETIC RE-USE OF BUILDINGS, PARTICULARLY WHERE THEY MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT, AND CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE DELIVERY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION.**

Alternative Options

The creation and protection of high quality and safe environments are required by national and regional policies, so there is considered to be no option to the main thrust of these principles. Detailed wording and emphasis can be discussed. For example see below.

Option for wording to take account of regeneration initiatives in the main towns and villages.

- **Promote and secure the highest standards of new development especially where they would regenerate and upgrade the existing character of towns and villages.**

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THEME 3

OUR ECONOMY

This theme deals with the future promotion and development of the economy of the District. It sets out how the Core Strategy will meet national and regional policies and how the economy of the District itself will be supported.

OUR EVIDENCE BASE SUMMARY

National policies summary

- PPS4 promotes economic development as a central objective of spatial planning and sustainable development
- Requires plans to have policies in place to support local economies and job creation

East of England Plan policies summary

- Braintree District should contribute towards the 42,000 new jobs requirement in central and north Essex from 2001 to 2021.
- Sufficient sites should be identified to provide for the required range and types of employment sectors.
- Impacts on the environment should be minimized.

The LSP Strategy

Objectives 7 and 8 of the Community Strategy Vision seek: -

- A District where ideas take shape through rising educational attainment and skills levels that create a strong and growing knowledge driven local economy.
- A District where the special qualities of its natural and built environment are recognized, harnessed and developed to make a major contribution to a vibrant economic future in which culture, heritage and leisure play an important part.

These policies support objectives 7 and 8 of the Community Strategy Vision

BDC Corporate Strategies

These policies support the following Corporate Strategies:

- Braintree Corporate Strategy and Action Plan.
- Braintree District Economic Development Strategy 2005-2008.
This strategy is due to be fully reviewed in 2008 to take account of the outputs of the recent economic studies

The Issues and Options Report feedback summary

- Existing employment sites should by and large be protected but some unsuitable sites could be released for other uses.
- Better balance needed between jobs and homes
- Policies should be flexible as to uses on employment sites
- New suitable sites are needed to cater for growth
- A new Innovation and Enterprise park should be allocated

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Sustainability Appraisal TO BE ADDED

Studies summary

- **Economic studies - There is potential for significant job growth in Braintree District. Policies should promote higher end jobs to broaden the economic base and reduce out-commuting. Policies should promote entrepreneurship and tourism development.**

Employment Land Review Study by Llewelyn Davies Yeang

This report concluded that the relationship between jobs and space is too weak for much reliance to be placed upon job forecasts and job density. Instead their assessment of employment needs was based upon market information and past rates of development.

The study identified a total of 32.5 hectares of vacant land allocated for employment development in 2006. Past rates of development showed an average take up of 3-5 hectares of employment land per year. At past rates of development, the 32.5 ha would provide for the next 6-10 years.

The study recommended that generally sites in current or recent employment use, should continue to be retained for offices, industry, warehousing or similar unless the site or location is unsuitable for modern standards of development, or would be a bad neighbour to adjacent sites. It identified 2.7% of current employment sites, which could be allocated for residential development.

The study suggests that provision should be made annually for 3-5 hectares of employment land, throughout the plan period, to meet current rates of employment land development. This would equate to a total of 54-90 hectares for the period from 2007-2025. After deducting existing provision of 32.5ha this suggests a need for an additional employment allocation of 21- 57 ha. It recommended that sites should be allocated to provide for 7 years employment development at all times during the plan period. (i.e. 21-36 ha)

The study anticipates that the combination of airport related expansion at Stansted and the recently dualled A120 between Braintree and Stansted will generate further demand in the A120 corridor. This makes a case for the plan designating a new business park adjacent to the A120.

Other Relevant Strategies

- **EERA Economic Strategy**

Strategic Spatial Objectives

- **The PROPOSED DRAFT policies support SSOs Nos 4, 5 and 8**

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Part 1

THE OVERALL ECONOMIC STRATEGY

In common with the national economy, the employment base in Braintree is changing. Unemployment in the District is lower than the regional or national rate, with an unemployment rate of 4% in 2006-7, compared with a 4.5% unemployment rate in the Eastern Region and a national average of 5.3%. However, this is an increase over the percentage in previous years. Job growth has not matched housing development, so there has been an increase in unsustainable out-commuting. 43% of the working population of Braintree District out-commuted in 2001, with 10% of these commuting to Chelmsford and 10% commuting to London.

However Braintree is also a very rural district and there is a need to cater for those living in the small towns and villages if there is to be a move towards more sustainable employment.

National and regional policies require that the Core Strategy must provide suitable policies to support the local economy by encouraging and facilitating the provision of local jobs and identifying the spatial framework for the supply and delivery of land and sites.

The need to expand the local economic base, reduce out-commuting and develop new land for employment are all supported by the economic studies: These studies suggest that the plan should move towards a more knowledge and entrepreneurship based economy, but also one that recognises the potential for Braintree to use its key assets of environment and location to attract appropriate tourism development and jobs.

The review of the Council's own economic strategy will identify key challenges in terms of sustainable job growth, skills training, workforce development, and large employment sites which are no longer "fit for purpose". It is also expected that there will be strong evidence from the business community, and the potential inward investors, to support proposals for the phased construction of an Innovation and Enterprise Park.

There are a small number of larger sites in the town centres and larger villages that would benefit from redevelopment to realise their full economic potential. They have the potential to make a major contribution to the delivery of a more sustainable economy for the district.

We think that the regeneration of sites in the town centres and in some of the key service villages should be a key element of the economic strategy.

We think that we need to safeguard most existing employment sites and allocated employment land.

We think that some employment sites could be allocated for other uses.

We think we need to allocate new land for employment, including a business/innovation park, for development later in the plan period.

We think we should recognise and protect suitable employment sites, and encourage suitable employment development in the rural areas.

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PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

THE DISTRICT ECONOMIC STRATEGY WILL:

- **IN LINE WITH THE EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN, THE COUNCIL'S OWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY PROMOTE THE DIVERSIFICATION OF THE ECONOMY TO:**
 - **REDRESS THE HISTORIC IMBALANCE BETWEEN HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT,**
 - **MAINTAIN HIGH LEVELS OF LOCAL EMPLOYMENT,**
 - **ESTABLISH A FLEXIBLE HIGHLY SKILLED WORKFORCE, AND**
 - **REDUCE OUT-COMMUTING**
- **PROMOTE THE DIVERSIFICATION AND STRENGTHENING OF THE RURAL ECONOMY THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF A RANGE OF APPROPRIATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES SUBJECT TO THE CRITERIA IN POLICY CPxx**
- **PROTECT AND ENHANCE KEY EXISTING TOURIST AND VISITOR FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE, WHILST ALSO PROMOTING SUITABLE NEW TOURIST DEVELOPMENT IN APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS, IN ORDER TO INCREASE THE RANGE, QUALITY AND TYPE OF FACILITIES AVAILABLE– SUBJECT TO THE APPROPRIATE CRITERIA IN POLICY CPxx**

Alternative policy approaches

Significant departures from this broad strategic approach would not be in line with national and regional policies or the evidence base. For example, the strategy cannot promote the redevelopment of employment sites for other uses if this would reduce the likelihood of achieving the required regional job targets. However changes to the emphasis or detail of parts of the policy could be considered. For example less emphasis could be given to the promotion of tourist development in the countryside. It should be remembered however that the promotion of tourism was one of the main suggestions in the economic studies.

THE RURAL ECONOMY

This part of the economic strategy deals exclusively with developments in the rural areas. The 90% of the district that is rural gives Braintree its essential character and it is for that reason the CS is putting forward a specific strategy covering the rural economy.

However, by definition the scope for economic development will be limited by national and regional policies relating to the protection of the countryside environment and the promotion of sustainable development. However, those policies also recognise the need to secure a sound sustainable future for the rural economy, which continues to contribute significantly to the economy of the district as a whole through tourism, agriculture and a multiplicity of local small businesses.

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It is therefore proposed that the Core Strategy should build on these current economic strengths, subject to ensuring that they will also sit well with the broader environmental and sustainability objectives.

More specifically, there are a small number of large, long established larger employment sites in the villages, which have or will become redundant. These offer opportunities for significant regeneration for a range of uses to complement the local communities and with potentially wider benefits. The preferred broad approach to these Regeneration Sites is set out in Policy CSxx

Finally there are also a number of existing small sites in the countryside, which offer useful local employment and the potential for small businesses to start up or expand. Many of these sites are legitimate long established uses, which at the present time have not formally recognised in the Local Plan.

Giving that recognition in appropriate cases in the Core Strategy and later documents could help to give some degree of long term certainty to the business involved, which would help them plan and develop. It would also give the Council more positive control over the sites and uses, which in turn would help in controlling unauthorised development on other, less suitable sites.

PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

THE RURAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY WILL:

FACILITATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS AIMED AT SUPPORTING THE RURAL ECONOMY WHERE THEY:

- **GIVE PRIORITY TO THE RE-USE OF SUITABLE PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED LAND OR BUILDINGS WHERE THESE ARE AVAILABLE.**
- **PROVIDE CLEAR PROPOSALS TO CREATE OR RETAIN LOCAL JOBS.**
- **CAN BE SHOWN TO HELP TOWARDS THE PROMOTION AND VIABILITY OF LOCAL FARMING ENTERPRISES, THE DIVERSIFICATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL OR WIDER RURAL ECONOMY, AND BE VIABLE AND FULLY DELIVERABLE**
- **DO NOT ENCOURAGE UNSUSTAINABLE FORMS OF TRAVEL, ESPECIALLY BY LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE, OR WOULD CAUSE UNACCEPTABLE IMPACTS ON THE HIGHWAY NETWORK.**
- **HAVE NO UNACCEPTABLE IMPACTS ON THE LOCAL AND WIDER COUNTRYSIDE.**

Alternative policy approaches

Two alternatives could potentially be considered.

1. It would be possible to frame a more or less strict policy, but either approach would risk being contrary to the higher level policies in terms of the potential impacts on the countryside environment, and the difficulties of achieving sustainable development especially in travel terms.
2. It would also be possible to include specific policies for the rural economy in the overall economic policy option. However, the importance and extent of the rural areas in the District suggest that a separate policy should be the preferred approach.

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PART 2

DELIVERING JOB GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT LAND PROVISION

Delivering job growth

National Policies require Councils to:

Deliver high levels of economic growth in suitable locations, to allow for the needs of business, and offer choice, flexibility and competition.

The recent consultation draft of PPS4 also stresses the need to plan for appropriate levels of local employment and balance residential and employment uses to promote sustainable development.

The East of England Plan:

The Secretary of State's proposed changes to the East of England Plan set out no specific targets for job growth, or the provision for employment land for Braintree District. Instead it allows for growth of 42,000 jobs in Central and North Essex. This area includes Braintree, Chelmsford, Uttlesford and Maldon. Half these jobs are to be provided at Harlow and at Stansted Airport, and Chelmsford is set to provide some 20,000 jobs through its recently approved Core Strategy. In theory therefore the balance to be provided in Braintree District to meet the East of England plan requirements would be less than 1,000 jobs. However the Regional Spatial Strategy does allow for local situations to be taken into account in local development documents if this can be supported by employment land reviews.

We think that that the RSS requirement is unacceptably low and unrealistic, especially if it is to meet the requirements of national policies.

Studies of the local economy were undertaken by the University of the West of England in 2005/6 and by Cambridge Econometrics in 2006. Both these reports show clearly that Braintree District can deliver up to 14,000 new jobs over the plan period, depending on the overall economic development strategy that the Council adopts. These studies also point to the need to balance historic high rates of housing growth with employment growth, promote a broader and hence more robust and sustainable local economic base, deliver higher end jobs, and to reduce out-commuting.

The studies also conclude that these jobs can be accommodated without detriment to the local environment, and indeed the promotion of tourism and higher end business development, which are two key elements in the East of England Plan, will help to protect and secure the environment of the District.

Employment land provision

The Employment Land Review (ELR) undertaken for the Council in 2007 shows that almost 38 ha of vacant allocated land was available in late 2007. However some of these sites may be promoted for other uses so around 32 ha of suitable land remains to be developed.

It also shows that the rate of employment land development increased from about 2.6 ha per year during the late 1990s to between 7 and 10 ha per year in the last three years. However this latest rise is likely to be a short term phenomenon, so future growth will probably be in the region of 3-5ha per year. This means that current employment land will run out in between 5 and 10 years.

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The ELR concludes that the Council should plan for between 57 and 95 ha across the plan period, but that sites should be identified to allow for a rolling 7 years supply (21-36 ha) during the period.

This designated employment land supply does not equate to any prescribed number of jobs as it is not possible to say with any certainty what uses will come forward on any sites. The requirement to be flexible however meets national policy and the overall economic strategy of the emerging RSS. It will certainly lead to far greater job provision than the RSS requires. The Council considers that this approach is fully justified by the current economic situation in the District as evidenced by the two economic studies and the employment land review.

We think that the Core Strategy should plan for the development of a minimum of 30 ha additional employment land to be brought on stream when the currently allocated sites are being developed out.

PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

DELIVERING JOB GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT LAND PROVISION

THE DELIVERY OF THE REQUIRED JOBS AND EMPLOYMENT LAND WILL BE SECURED BY:

- **PROVIDING FOR AND PROMOTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUFFICIENT SUITABLE LAND OR SITES, TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE RSS AND THE LOCAL ECONOMIC NEEDS OF THE DISTRICT.**
- **PHASING THE RELEASE OF NEW SUITABLE EMPLOYMENT SITES TO ENSURE A CONTINUOUS 7-10 YEAR SUPPLY.**

Alternative Policy Approaches

The plan could potentially follow two broad alternative policy approaches to that set out.

1. It could cater for the low level of job growth indicated in the RSS for the District. However this would not help in achieving a more effective balance of houses to jobs nor help reduce out commuting. Also it would not assist in delivering the main objective of the strategy, which is to broaden the local economic base.
2. It could seek to provide for a much higher level of job growth than is proposed. However this is unlikely to be deliverable given the environmental constraints of the District and its overall position in the regional hierarchy. Clearly, the bulk of new economic development in the sub-region will be located in Chelmsford and Colchester and it would be unrealistic for the plan to try to match that level of growth.

PART 3

PRIORITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT AND REGENERATION.

We think that it is important to identify the major priorities for the delivery of the economic strategy. The priorities that are identified from the evidence base and the Council's own corporate strategies are set out below.

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POLICY APPROACHES

We think that the priorities are needed to focus the economic strategy of the Plan on the most important elements, which should be delivered first.

We think that regeneration of the respective town and key service village centres is the highest priority, followed by securing the future of existing employment sites and allocations.

These priorities could be changed, but this would risk prejudicing the Council's stated strategies for regeneration.

Priority 1 Regeneration

We recognise the need to define greenfield employment sites in the longer term, but we are also concerned that the economic and job-creating potential of the main town centres and some important sites in the villages are fully realised. This would benefit all the town centres directly, and the wider District by broadening the opportunities for local jobs and securing significant new private sector investment in the local economy.

Choosing sites -Key Criteria

It is important that the sites are chosen that offer the best justification for a special policy approach. It would be very easy for resources to be spread too thinly if a large number of sites was identified. A list of key criteria for choosing these sites is set out in Appendix x

The major town centre sites offer important opportunities for investment and will also have a significant impact on the local environment, which would in turn promote the tourist attraction of the town centres to tourists and visitors. Areas have already been identified which would benefit from regeneration and the Council is actively working to promote and secure their redevelopment.

These areas are:

Rayne Rd/Panfield Lane area-Braintree
Land East of Town Hall Centre –Braintree
Newlands Precinct area-Witham
Land East of High Street- Halstead

The village sites, which offer regeneration opportunities, should satisfy specific criteria. The overall spatial strategy would not generally support such large scale developments in the villages but these sites are of a large enough size and local importance, especially for keeping and/or creating local jobs, that they justify special consideration and action.

The village sites identified at present are:

The Premdor site at Sible Hedingham
The Crittall site at Silver End

The delivery of such complex main towns and key service villages regeneration schemes is likely to be far more difficult than the development of greenfield employment sites, so the Council thinks that they should be given the highest priority both in planning policy and delivery terms. However, as this is a long-term strategy, it is important that the approach and priority attached to these areas should be clearly set out in this Core Strategy. The detailed decisions for the planning of these areas will be part of future planning documents

We think that the highest priority for employment generation should be the development of key REGENERATION SITES in the main towns and a number of the villages.

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PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

REGENERATION

THE REGENERATION OF KEY AREAS OR SITES IN THE MAIN TOWN CENTRES AND VILLAGES WILL BE PROMOTED AND SECURED

IN THE MAIN TOWN CENTRES, DEVELOPMENT WILL MAKE THE FULLEST CONTRIBUTION TO BOTH THAT CENTRE AND THE WIDER THE ECONOMY, COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE DISTRICT.

IN THE VILLAGES, DEVELOPMENT WILL BE APPROPRIATE TO THE ROLE OF THE SETTLEMENT AND ITS RURAL LOCATION.

DETAILED PROPOSALS/GUIDANCE WILL SET OUT IN THE SITE ALLOCATIONS/DEVELOPMENT POLCIES DPD/SPD??

Alternative Policy Approaches

There are two alternatives to this approach.

1. Not to promote the regeneration of the town and key village sites.

This would however conflict with national and RSS policies aimed at securing sustainable urban regeneration, the Council's corporate strategies, and would also minimise the opportunities to secure important local economic, community and environmental benefits.

2. Choose more stringent or looser criteria for choosing sites.

This could lead to either too many sites being included in poor locations, or to important local issues not being identified and tackled. Some employment redevelopment sites could be included under this approach.

Priority 2 Safeguarding existing employment areas

The ELR is clear that the majority of the existing employment areas (both developed and allocated in the Local Plan) should be retained if the long term job creation employment objectives of national and regional policies are to be met. These areas offer a wide range of sizes, types and locations of sites which can cater for the broad spectrum of the business community, and which are in generally sustainable locations.

The list of sites that we think should be retained is in Appendix x

We think that these areas should be retained in principle and that this objective should be clearly stated in the CS.

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PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

SAFEGUARDING EXISTING EMPLOYMENT AREAS

THE DEVELOPMENT AND/OR RENEWAL OF EXISTING AND ALLOCATED EMPLOYMENT SITES WILL BE SUPPORTED AND PROMOTED WHERE THEY ARE SUITABLE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE LONGER TERM.

RETAIL, AND OTHER USES WHICH WOULD BE BETTER LOCATED IN THE TOWN CENTRES, WILL NOT BE SUPPORTED UNLESS THEY ARE A MINOR PART OF THE MAIN COMMERCIAL /INDUSTRIAL USE.

Alternative Policy Approaches

There are two potentially realistic alternatives to this approach.

1. Not to safeguard existing employment sites.

This would result in considerable pressure for alternative uses and would significantly reduce the ability of the Council to deliver the jobs needed to secure its economic objectives. It would also increase the pressure for the release of greenfield sites for employment to the detriment of the local environment and overall sustainability objectives.

2. To safeguard fewer or more sites

This option may be appropriate depending in the level and type of sites to be protected. However this may also put pressure of perfectly suitable sites to be redeveloped for other uses and could also mean that some sites would be retained that should be redeveloped. That position may be difficult to defend give current national policy guidance.

Priority 3 Employment redevelopment areas.

There are a small number of sites that the employment land review found to be unsuitable for long-term economic development and that could usefully be considered for alternative forms of development. This approach is consistent with national and regional policies, to encourage the most beneficial use of land and redundant/unsuitable sites. However it is not for the Core Strategy to define these sites, or suitable alternative uses, as that will be done through later planning documents but the principles for releasing such sites for redevelopment can be established in the Core Strategy.

We think that sites not suitable for long-term employment uses should be considered for alternative forms of development.

PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

EMPLOYMENT REDEVELOPMENT AREAS.

WHERE EXISTING EMPLOYMENT SITES ARE NO LONGER SUITABLE FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT, THEY WILL BE IDENTIFIED IN THE SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD. ALTERNATIVE USES WILL BE PROMOTED WHICH WILL SECURE APPROPRIATE FORMS OF REGENERATION

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Alternative Policy Approaches

Two alternative approaches are generally similar to those relating to Safeguarding Existing Employment Areas. These are not felt to be appropriate for the same reasons

Another approach would be to define some sites as “Regeneration Sites” to be dealt with under that policy. However the site may not be in the most suitable locations nor offer the widest opportunities for regeneration.

Priority 4 The designation of new employment allocations

Our economic studies and the employment land review all recognise the need for additional employment land to be provided to meet the long term economic needs of the District and provide for a wide range of business users. The timing of the release of these sites for development will be important as they could draw businesses away from other established sites if released too early.

Both national policy and the Regional Spatial Strategy seek to locate new employment land in sustainable locations at major urban areas, market towns and key rural centres.

The employment land review suggests that new allocations are unlikely to be needed until about half way through the plan period. However there may be local circumstances in which an earlier release may be justified, for example, if there is a shortage of a particular type of employment land in a part of the District.

We think that these new employment areas should be located in accordance with the Spatial Strategy, which identifies Braintree, Witham and Halstead as the main locations for future development, but with smaller scale development being possible in the Key Service Villages.

PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

NEW EMPLOYMENT LOCATIONS

IN ACCORD WITH THE SPATIAL STRATEGY AND THE LOCATIONAL PRINCIPLES SET OUT IN NATIONAL POLICY AND THE RSS, NEW EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT WILL BE LOCATED:

- **AT THE MAIN TOWNS OF BRAINTREE AND WITHAM.**
- **LOCATION OPTIONS INCLUDE NORTH-WEST BRAINTREE, SOUTH-WEST OF BRAINTREE, SOUTH-WEST OF GREAT NOTLEY AND NORTH-EAST OF WITHAM.**
- **AT SPECIFIC KEY SERVICE VILLAGES WHICH HAVE EMPLOYMENT REGENERATION LOCATIONS.**

Alternative Policy Approaches

The plan could allow new development to locate entirely in accord with market forces, but this could lead to pressure for development in unsustainable, or otherwise unacceptable locations, contrary to national and regional policies.

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As with the policies to retain existing employment sites (Policy??) a “market led” approach could also lead to pressure to redevelop existing employment sites, which the market may find less attractive for commercial uses.

Priority 5 The development of a new Innovation and Enterprise Business Park

The development of the Skyline Business Park at Gt. Notley has shown that high quality commercial development, well located, can contribute much to the future economic development of the district.

In addition the economic studies and the employment land review recognize the potential benefits of delivering a development, which would act as a catalyst for innovation and also a grow-on centre for local small businesses.

There are a number of options as to the size, location and character of this type of development.

However the employment land review suggests that a site (or sites) in the vicinity of the A120 at Braintree would be most likely to be attractive to business and hence be deliverable because of their easy access to Stansted and the M11 corridor.

The appropriate size for such a development has yet to be established, but evidence to date suggests it should be in the region of 25ha. More detailed research is needed of the likely future demand before such a decision can be made.

However, it may be possible to phase development over a period so that an initial small scale site could be expanded as required and when investment factors are right. The choice of the initial site would be critical to ensure that there would be not major obstacles in securing such expansion in the future.

A range of commercial uses could be accommodated on such a development, but we think that it should be developed to provide for a full range of units from seedbed starter units upwards. This would allow for the most flexible approach to economic development and job creation by harnessing local entrepreneurial skills and allowing for growth on space, as companies require larger premises. This approach could also fit well with longer-term phasing of the site's development as suggested, and would also give the best opportunities for positive links to the new housing areas being proposed at Braintree to secure mixed-use and more sustainable developments.

We do not think that this type of development should cater for a large percentage of B8 type uses, as these do not generally provide for high job densities, or the higher end jobs that the Council is seeking to promote and secure.

The details of this development would be worked up in the Site Allocations and Development Policies Development Plan Documents but the principles for its general location and scale should be included in this Core Strategy.

We think that a new Business Park/Innovation Centre, in the region of 25-35 ha, should be located close to the A120 at Braintree.

We think that phasing should be considered to allow for easier funding and more flexible longer-term development options.

We think that uses should be generally restricted to B1 classes II and III so as to promote the desired employment outcomes.

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PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

NEW INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE BUSINESS PARK

A NEW BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PARK OF AROUND 25 HA WILL BE PROMOTED AND DEVELOPED IN THE VICINITY OF THE A120 AT BRAINTREE.

THE DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PHASED TO PROVIDE FOR A RANGE OF SITES AND BUILDINGS TO CATER FOR SMALL, MEDIUM AND LARGER BUSINESSES, WITHIN CLASS B1 (II AND III) .

POSITIVE LINKS BY LOCATION AND DESIGN WILL BE SOUGHT TO THE PROPOSED URBAN EXTENSIONS AT BRAINTREE TO PROMOTE AN OVERALL MIX OF USES THROUGHOUT THE EXPANDED URBAN AREAS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMENT AS REQUIRED BY POLICY CS1

FURTHER GUIDANCE WILL BE SET OUT IN THE SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES DPDS

Alternative Policy Approaches

We think there may be several possible alternatives to this policy approach.

1. Not seek to secure this development.

This would be contrary to the advice in the economic studies and the employment land review. It would also make the objective of broadening the District's economic base and assisting the development of small to medium sized business more difficult. Finally it would limit the opportunities to reduce out-commuting by delivering higher end jobs to attract current commuters.

2. Locate the development elsewhere in the District.

We think the only other realistic location would be Witham given the scale of the proposal, the need for good transport access and to locate the development close to where people live. However the employment land review is clear that Braintree is the preferred location in view of its proximity to Stansted, the relatively lightly trafficked A120 west of Braintree compared to the heavily congested A12 and the likelihood of identifying suitable sites.

3. Reconsider the size of the development.

The employment land review does not recommend a particular scale of development but we think that the proposed size will:

- Supply a critical mass of development potential for a wide range of sites and uses.
- Attract a sufficient level of investment to ensure that the development is delivered.
- Not be so large as to have unacceptable environmental or traffic impacts.

Priority 6 The promotion of mixed-use developments

The Core Strategy is identifying urban extensions to deliver the long-term housing growth for the District. Although these will be well located to the urban areas and as such should be in sustainable locations, we think that they can also make a positive contribution to local employment and the local economy.

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Any employment within the housing areas themselves, will probably be on a relatively small scale to be compatible with nearby housing, but could include contributions from community facilities and services as well as shopping and leisure developments.

It will also be possible for new housing to provide strong links to existing employment areas, the new employment areas and the Innovation and Enterprise Business Park, so that future residents can have the best chance of finding work locally. Both these situations can be defined as “mixed-use” developments.

We think that new housing areas should contribute towards sustainable mixed use by including or adding to some local employment opportunities.

PREFERRED POLICY WORDING

MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS

WHERE THE COUNCIL IS PROMOTING THE ALLOCATION OF LAND FOR HOUSING EXPANSION IN THE FORM OF URBAN EXTENSIONS, THE PROVISION OF EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT WILL BE REQUIRED AS PART OF THE DELIVERY OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES.

THE TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT WILL BE DETERMINED THROUGH FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENTS, BUT IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT IT COULD INCLUDE:

- **REINFORCING LINKS TO EXISTING EMPLOYMENT AREAS,**
- **LINKAGES TO A NEW INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE BUSINESS PARK DEVELOPMENT**
- **THE PROVISION OF SMALL SCALE BUSINESS / INDUSTRIAL UNITS TO CATER FOR LOCAL SMALL BUSINESS**
- **THE PROVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES FOR THE NEW RESIDENTS.**
- **THE INCLUSION OF LIVE/WORK OR SIMILAR DEVELOPMENTS**
- **APPROPRIATE TOURIST / LEISURE DEVELOPMENT**

FURTHER GUIDANCE WILL BE SET OUT IN THE SITE ALLOCATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES DPDS

Alternative Policy Approaches

It would be possible to promote the development of new residential areas without regard to local employment possibilities. However this would be contrary to national and regional policies for delivering mixed-use sustainable developments. We think that the approach set out in the preferred policy will give sufficient flexibility to ensure that such developments are delivered.

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THEME 4

OUR COMMUNITIES AND SERVICES

PART 1

OUR EVIDENCE BASE SUMMARY

National policies summary

PPS 3 requires plans to:

- Achieve a wide choice of high quality homes, both affordable and market housing, to address the requirements of the community.
- Widen opportunities for home ownership and ensure high quality housing for those who cannot afford market housing, in particular those who are vulnerable or in need.
- Improve affordability across the housing market, including by increasing the supply of housing.
- Create sustainable, inclusive, mixed communities in all areas, both urban and rural.
- Make effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed
- Meet accommodation requirements of specific groups including elderly and disabled
- Identify and maintain a rolling 5 year supply of deliverable housing land

East of England Plan policies summary

- Braintree District will make provision for a minimum provision of 4340 dwellings to be completed from 2006 to 2021 (a minimum of 290 dwellings per annum). This rate of development is to be continued in the early years beyond 2021
- Development should be sustainable and coordinate with the necessary infrastructure.
- At least 35% of all housing coming forward after adoption should be affordable.
- Appropriate provision should be made for gypsies and travellers.

The LSP Strategy

These policies support objective 6 of the Community Strategy Vision which seeks a District that delivers high quality services, a choice of housing to meet everyone's needs and innovative solutions to meet changing patterns of working and the promotion of sustainable development.

BDC Corporate Strategies

These policies support the following Corporate Strategies:

- Braintree Corporate Strategy and Action Plan.
- Braintree District Housing Strategy 2001-2005.
This strategy is due to be fully reviewed in 2008 to take account of the outputs of the recent studies

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- Braintree Draft Green Spaces Strategy

This strategy is due to be adopted by the Council shortly. It will:

- Guide the quality, delivery (including funding) and future management of open space.
- Protect the natural environment and promote sustainable maintenance
- Promote awareness and community action

- Braintree District Rural Policy and Action Statement

The Issues and Options Report Feedback Summary

Housing

- General support to locate housing development in the main towns and some larger villages.
- Lack of support for new settlements.
- Mixed response in relation to affordable housing provision, with support for stronger policies but concerns over viability.
- General lack of support for increasing AH provision over 30% despite East of England plan aspiration for 35%.
- Plan should set out criteria for gypsy and traveller sites
-

Services and facilities

- Broad support for continued provision of health care, education and sports in the district.
- Need for improved policing especially in the rural areas.

Studies Summary

Urban Capacity Study

- This study examined the potential for urban capacity for housing in the three towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead and the larger villages of Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Kelvedon and Feering, Hatfield Peverel, Sible Hedingham and Silver End.
- The study estimated that there is potential to deliver 6351 new homes from all sources of supply (including land, empty homes, conversion of commercial property and potential from living over the shop) within existing development boundaries in these settlements, over the period 2006-2026.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment

- Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
- Housing Trajectory 2007
There were 658 net additional dwellings built in Braintree District between 2006 and 2007.

Rural Services Surveys

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Other relevant strategies

- **Essex Draft Schools Organisation Plan**
- Essex Local Delivery Plan (Health Trust)
Essex Policing Plan

Strategic Spatial Objectives

These policies support SSOs Nos 4, 5 and 8

COMMUNITIES AND SERVICES STRATEGY

Creating and delivering sustainable communities is at the heart of the Government's approach to planning. It also forms the bedrock of the Regional Spatial Strategy. It is crucial therefore that the Core Strategy sets out how we will deliver that objective at the local level. Other parts of the Core Strategy set out how we will manage and deliver important aspects of sustainable communities such as jobs and protection of our environment. Both are very important in Braintree District with our changing economy, large rural areas and attractive countryside, towns and villages. However sustainable communities also depend on the provision of a range of other essential services and facilities that contribute towards everyone's quality of life. The most important of these are housing and social services such as health, education, and policing. This section of the Core Strategy sets out the policies that we think are needed to deliver the housing and community services we will need in the future.

DELIVERING THE HOUSING WE NEED

How much housing is needed?

The East of England Plan sets out a minimum requirement of 4340 dwellings to be delivered from 2006 to 2021. This equates to around 290 units per year. It also states that this rate of development should be continued in the early years after 2021. This results in a minimum requirement for Braintree District for the period 2006 to 2025 of 5,510 dwellings.

Although housing will therefore continue to be a major part of the new development of the District, this is far less than current building rates (the average net additional dwellings per annum over the past 5 years is 674) which are set to continue for several years as sites with planning permissions are developed.

The East of England Plan requirement is to be regarded as a minimum and the achievement of additional housing is acceptable if it can be delivered without breaching environmental and infrastructure constraints by:

- Increasing density
- Encouraging opportunities on previously developed sites
- Making best use of policies to provide exception sites to provide affordable housing in rural areas

The Council therefore regards the East of England Plan requirement as a minimum to be achieved and will not regard this as an absolute constraint to delivering additional housing, particularly where this will secure key objectives of this strategy such as affordable housing and the provision of infrastructure.

Braintree Local Development Framework Draft Core Strategy Preferred Options for Consultation with Key Stakeholders - LDF Member Panel 7th May 2008

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We think we need to set out clearly the numbers of dwellings to be delivered over the plan period, plus guidance on the range of sizes, types and tenures to be provided.

Where and when will the housing be built?

In Chapter 1 we explained how we intend to guide the location of new development overall across the District in the plan period. New housing will be a major part of this development and choosing the best locations will be a crucial factor in promoting and delivering sustainable development for the future.

- The main towns (urban capacity)

Developing in the main towns provides the best opportunities to deliver sustainable housing (including affordable housing) development in the District and support national and regional policies. They are also the best locations to take advantage of major regeneration opportunities and link homes with jobs.

The Urban Capacity Study and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment shows clearly that there are enough suitable sites with either with planning permission or already allocated for housing, to provide for about 10 years supply at current building rates.

- The key service villages

The UCS shows that there are opportunities for a significant number of sites to be developed inside the existing boundaries of these larger villages. This development can help to support local businesses, services and facilities as well as making good use of some underused land. It can also deliver some local affordable housing for people from other nearby villages.

- The urban extensions at Braintree and Witham

Although the Urban Capacity Study shows we can deliver much of our future housing needs within the main towns and Key Service Villages, and the housing trajectory shows that this supply could last for about 10 years, we need to plan for longer term growth through the release of greenfield sites on the edge of the urban areas. This will ensure that we meet the national policy requirement for an ongoing 5 years supply of housing in the long term.

As these sites are not needed straight away, they should only be released for development when the identified urban capacity sites are becoming exhausted. However decisions are needed now on their location and overall scale so that they can be properly planned and delivered in a phased and timely manner.

These new areas should be mixed developments, including the services, facilities that will be needed by those living there and, if possible, sites or areas where new local jobs can be provided. They should also be planned to meet the highest environmental and sustainability standards, which we set out in other policies. The details for the future development of these areas will be set out in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document or through the preparation of Area Action Plans

- The other villages and the countryside

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Almost all of the many small villages in the district have seen some form of housing development over the past 20 years or so. However this form of development is now recognised as unsustainable.

An increasing lack of rural job opportunities, loss of local services and facilities and a growing reliance on the private car for transport, all make the promotion of significant amounts of village market housing in the future unacceptable. These changes also show clearly that housing development in itself has not kept small villages communities sustainable. In addition, the attractiveness of many of our villages means that housing has become very expensive and is now out of the reach of most local people.

National and regional policies severely restrict new housing in the open countryside, but there may be rare occasions where a single dwelling, including a change of use or conversion, can be justified to serve a particular local or functional need.

Finally PPS7 allows “very occasionally” for the one off house of exceptional quality and innovation. The quality and sensitivity of our countryside and villages would make the case for such a development extremely difficult to make in the district.

We think that almost all new housing should be built in the main towns, key service villages, and, when needed, in planned urban extensions Braintree and Witham.

Options for urban extensions under consideration include north-west Braintree, north-east of Witham and south-west of Witham.

We think that there is some scope for affordable housing exception sites in the villages. Other small village sites could be considered as part of the preparation of the Allocations Document.

What types of housing are needed?

As well as planning for the total number of houses, and where they should be built, the Government says we should also plan for a range of house types, sizes and tenures (owned/shared/rented) to cater for all who wish or need to live in the District.

To help us do this we have commissioned studies (in partnership with our neighbouring Councils) to give us an accurate as picture as possible of housing need across the community and what types of accommodation are likely to be required in the future. These will help us to put the right policies in place to deliver the right type of housing.

Market Housing

The private sector will deliver the bulk of new housing, which most people will buy into in the normal way. The housing market has been very strong in Braintree over the years and whilst the market overall is slowing, there is every indication that relative strength will continue and new houses built. In the last few years

We think that the private housing sector will continue to deliver sufficient amounts of new dwellings in the district over the life of the plan to more than meet the current requirements set out in the RSS.

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Affordable Housing

Because house prices in Braintree District are high, many people cannot afford to buy, or even enter shared ownership, on the open market. This is a growing national problem, so the Government requires councils to put in place local policies to deliver a supply of “affordable housing” as part of their overall housing strategy.

The East of England Plan also sets out an expectation in its policy for the delivery of affordable housing that applies to the region as a whole of 35% of new dwellings but it allows for local targets to be set where justified. PPS3 sets a national guideline for site size at 15 units and this is also the limit set out the current local plan.

We have looked at the conclusions of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and this confirms the need for more affordable housing in this District. Many of the sites currently being developed are below the 15-unit limit. This has resulted in a significant under-provision of affordable housing against what should have been achieved given the total numbers of houses built.

This problem applies to both villages and urban areas where many sites are well below 15 units. We think therefore that the current 15-unit threshold is not justified as it is resulting in a deficiency of affordable housing delivery. A substantial increase in the provision of affordable housing on urban sites will also help to achieve more sustainable development. The urban extensions, which will be needed to supply housing after about 2013, can also be planned from the outset to deliver a higher proportion of affordable housing

We think that the current policies for affordable housing need to be altered to provide for much higher amounts to be delivered over the plan period.

We propose that the threshold should be 3 dwelling units and over, with a site size of 0.1 hectares and over, and the proportion of affordable housing to be provided as 40% of the total dwelling units.

Tenure split should be 70% rented and 30% intermediate tenure and all units will be required to meet the space, sustainability and adaptability standards required by the Housing Corporation for rented homes.

Specific Household Groups

The SHMA identifies a number of specific groups of households that do not perhaps fit easily into the main categories outlined above. These may require special policies in the CS depending on the issues that they need to address.

Gypsies and Travellers

Government guidance in Circulars 1/2006 and 4/2007 says that Core Strategies should include a specific policy on this issue. It must set out the criteria that the Council will apply in choosing a site or sites and must ensure that the required numbers of pitches are delivered as set out in the latest Regional Policy guidelines.

At the time of drafting this document, the RSS study indicates a requirement for an additional 16 pitches within Braintree District before 2011 and a further 17 pitches between 2011 and 2025. This requirement has still to be approved by Government.

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Other groups with special housing needs

Groups of people who may be included in this category are the elderly, the disabled, some key workers and some types of families with children. It is true that all may benefit from housing provision outside the normal housing market or affordable housing schemes, and that some may require special designs of building. However it is equally true that all these groups require as good, if not better, access to all the services, jobs and transport that support the bulk of the population. Groups such as the elderly and disabled have particular needs for community support and would not benefit from living in isolated locations. This means that they should be living in the same places if their special needs are to be met in a sustainable and inclusive way.

We need to include a criteria based policy for gypsy and traveller sites in this Core Strategy.

We think that all housing for special household groups can and should be located in the same broad locations as other housing.

We think that we should include a policy requiring all new homes to be designed to lifetime home standards.

Creating high quality places to live

The creation of high quality places to live is a key objective of national planning policy and of the Braintree Local Strategic Partnership. Good design, both in the look of housing and its layout, looks attractive and encourages people to value the place they live, leading to less vandalism and crime. Also as housing will make up most new development in the District, it will be critical to the overall quality of the environment in the future.

Housing designs and layout is getting better, but there is still room for improvement. Often the best approach will be to reflect the character of the local area, especially where there are many historic buildings. However there may well be places where other design approaches can be as effective and just as acceptable.

Density-the number of dwellings on a site-can have a significant impact on the quality of new housing. Higher densities do not necessarily mean low quality, but more care is needed to get it right. Also of course low densities mean that more land has to be used to deliver the housing we need, putting pressure on our valuable and attractive countryside. A balance has to be struck between the two, so setting absolute density targets is not likely to be the best way of getting the best quality housing in all locations.

Good design also means making sure that housing is as accessible as possible to all the services, jobs and facilities that residents need. Including enough well designed and maintained open spaces and footpaths and cycle ways, which will give good access to public transport and local shops, all have a key role to play.

We think that securing high quality housing design and layouts which link housing to nearby services and transport is an essential part of protecting the overall environment of the district, promoting social inclusion and securing sustainable communities.

We think that density should depend on the character of the area and the types of development being proposed.

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PREFERRED POLICY WORDING:

HOUSING DELIVERY STRATEGY

- PROVISION WILL BE MADE, FOR THE DELIVERY OF A MINIMUM OF 5510 DWELLINGS BETWEEN 2006 AND 2025 IN ACCORDANCE WITH POLICY H1 OF THE EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN
- THE MAJORITY OF THESE DWELLINGS WILL BE LOCATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR THE DISTRICT WITHIN THE URBAN AREAS OF BRAINTREE, WITHAM AND HALSTEAD, AND THE KEY SERVICE VILLAGES, ON SITES TO BE DEFINED IN THE SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD.
- NEW MIXED-USE URBAN EXTENSIONS WILL BE DEVELOPED WHEN REQUIRED AT BRAINTREE AND WITHAM
- WITHIN ALL THESE AREAS, PROVISION WILL BE MADE FOR A RANGE OF DWELLING TYPES AND SIZES TO MEET THE IDENTIFIED HOUSING NEED FOR ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY.
- AFFORDABLE HOUSING WILL BE PROVIDED ON HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS OF 3 DWELLINGS AND OVER AND SITES OF 0.1 HA AND OVER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA – 40% OF DWELLINGS ON THESE SITES WILL BE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.
- DENSITIES WILL BE APPROPRIATE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE LOCATION/SETTLEMENTS CONCERNED, AND WILL DELIVER HIGH QUALITY LIVING ENVIRONMENTS. HIGHER DENSITIES WILL BE APPROPRIATE IN THE MAIN TOWN CENTRES, AND THOSE KEY VILLAGE LOCATIONS WHERE IT WOULD REFLECT AND COMPLEMENT THE CHARACTER OF THAT SETTLEMENT.

Alternative Policy Approaches

The alternative spatial distribution scenarios for development across the district as a whole have been set out in Chapter 1- The Spatial Strategy.

The approach set out in the Housing Delivery Strategy Preferred Wording accords with both the Spatial Strategy and national and regional policies.

URBAN AREA DEVELOPMENT

In terms of the location of new housing in the urban areas, it is considered that there is no reasonable policy alternative given the importance put on that approach by national and regional policies.

KEY SERVICE VILLAGES

Development in key service villages is supported in the RSS Policy SS4.

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PART 2

DELIVERING THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES WE NEED

We all need a wide range of services and facilities to support and add to quality of life. National and regional planning policies make the retention and development of such services and facilities an important part of the delivery of sustainable communities for the future.

Most of the major services such as health, education, social services and police are supplied by local authorities at various levels. Other larger scale facilities, such as those catering for sport, leisure and cultural facilities and community centres are often supplied by a mixture of local authorities, the private sector and voluntary agencies. There are also those small local businesses, such as garages, pubs and village shops, which are often looked upon as local services, especially in the villages, but whose future depends very much on the continued support of the local community to keep them viable. The plan will therefore rely on a wide range of organisations and businesses to deliver the types and quality of services that we all will need in the future.

In a largely rural district such as Braintree, it is becoming more difficult to provide or keep the services and facilities everyone needs to support the quality of daily life. These problems are common across the country as more people rely on cars to travel to towns for their services and many local services have become uneconomic to provide or maintain. The current round of village post office closures, the closure of village schools in the past and the reduction of rural bus services are examples of these problems.

It is very important therefore that the plan has policies that will help keep our villages as sustainable as possible, by providing for new or expanded services where needed and trying to keep those that already support the local community.

In the main towns, providing and keeping facilities is generally easier, but the growth in housing to be delivered by the plan means that new or expanded facilities will still be needed and existing ones retained or improved.

Delivering the services and facilities we need

The plan can try to achieve the above objectives in three main ways.

Firstly it can work with the major public bodies concerned to make sure that they are fully aware of the future developments and community requirements of the District, and include the facilities needed in their own future development and funding plans. This is especially important for education, health and social services as these are the basic services used by everyone at some point in their lives. By working together with our local authority partners we can make sure that the right type and scale of services are delivered at the right place and the right time.

Of course new education and health facilities are very expensive and local government must as far as possible keep costs down. By planning well in advance, these services can be provided far more efficiently and effectively.

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Secondly the plan can deliver the services and facilities we need by securing the funding from developers. This funding can deliver the service or facility directly or it can be an essential part of the long term planning and funding of public services. They can either be provided as part of the development (for example open space) or used to fund wider provision where this is required.

This approach is a long established part of the planning system but the Government is now looking to secure developer funding and delivery in a much more structured way, through the Community Infrastructure Levy.

We set out our specific proposals for this in the Delivering our Plan section of this document.

There are also a number of facilities, especially in the health and leisure sectors, which are often provided by the private sector as purely business development ventures. Examples are health and fitness centres, golf courses, town centre leisure venues and private health care facilities. These developments can also offer good local job opportunities, as they are normally labour intensive, and can therefore contribute significantly to the economy and attractiveness of the district as whole. The Plan can offer support to such developments, provided they fit into the overall strategy for the District.

Thirdly the Plan can try to make sure that existing services and facilities are retained as far as possible. Open space of all types, (both public and private), small shops, youth facilities, allotments, and community halls and centres are all valuable parts of the local community fabric. They are often of particular value in the smaller and more isolated villages where the loss of a local facility or service can be quite serious for the residents. Such loss can also be important in the towns, and key service villages, where there may be pressure to redevelop existing facilities for higher value developments such as housing. Such redevelopment in towns may be acceptable, providing suitable alternatives are provided, but their loss can have unacceptable impacts on the delivery of both sustainable development and quality of life for the future.

The Plan can both support proposals for improvement or expansion of specific facilities, or resist proposals that would result in their being lost if no suitable alternatives are available. The plan can also guide bodies, which may be in a position to offer help and support to local services or businesses (including the council itself) by making clear that it is an important priority to retain and/or improve them.

We think that the Plan should ensure that the new or expanded facilities and services, which are needed to serve the growth of the District, are provided in the right place and at the right time.

We think that it is important for the plan to protect existing services and facilities as far as is realistically possible.

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PREFERRED POLICY WORDING:

DELIVERING THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES WE NEED

Delivering our future quality of life

THE COUNCIL WILL WORK WITH PARTNERS, SERVICE DELIVERY ORGANISATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY, TO ENSURE THAT THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES REQUIRED TO PROVIDE FOR THE FUTURE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY (INCLUDING HEALTH, EDUCATION, POLICING, SPORT, THE ARTS, AND LOCAL COMMUNITY FACILITIES) ARE DELIVERED IN A TIMELY, EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANNER. PROVISION WILL BE FUNDED EITHER THROUGH THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY, OR THE COUNCIL'S OWN STANDARD CHARGES

SO AS TO BE AS WIDELY AVAILABLE AS POSSIBLE, THE PROVISION OF MAIN SERVICES AND FACILITIES WILL BE DIRECTED TOWARDS THE MAIN TOWNS, REGENERATION AREAS, KEY SERVICE VILLAGES AND GROWTH AREAS, AS SET OUT IN THE SPATIAL STRATEGY.

IN THE OTHER VILLAGES AND RURAL AREAS, SERVICES AND FACILITIES WILL BE SUPPORTED, DEVELOPED AND LOCATED TO MEET THE DEFINED NEEDS OF EACH SETTLEMENT OR THE LOCAL AREA.

THE LOSS, OR SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION OF, EXISTING SERVICES AND FACILITIES WILL BE RESISTED, UNLESS SATISFACTORY ALTERNATIVES CAN BE PROVIDED OR ARE AVAILABLE.

Alternative policy approaches

The Core Strategy is required to be a major vehicle for the delivery of the services needed by the community. As explained above, this can be done by:

- Working with partners to ensure that their own service plans take account of community needs, and address those needs in future decision making. Clearly the council also has a critical role to play in the delivery of services and facilities to the community through its own services.
- Requiring them as part of the planning gain package for approval of (for example) housing developments, or
- Supporting such proposals through the planning system,
- Resisting the loss of existing facilities,

Whilst the emphasis and wording of the policy can be debated, especially in relation to the villages, rural areas, and the need to replace the loss of facilities, it is considered that there is no realistic alternative to the overall thrust of the policy as set out.

In particular, the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy will make the delivery of such services and facilities central to the planning system and to the achievement of sustainable communities. .

Not to secure such delivery would therefore be contrary to current national, regional, LSP policies, and this council's own corporate strategies.