

# LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PANEL AGENDA



THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

**Date:** Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2008

**Time – 6.00pm**

**Venue:** Town Hall Centre, Council Chamber, 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**

Councillor Walters

### **2. Declarations of Interests**

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.

*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 held for the Local Development Framework Panel on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008 (minutes previously issued).
- 4. 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](mailto: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.

***At the time of compiling the agenda there were no questions.***

5. **Draft Braintree District Sustainable Community and Core Strategy Technical Supplement.** To consider and note the contents of the supplement before going out for public consultation. (Page 1)
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. **Any Other Business.** To consider any other matters arising.

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.

8. **PRIVATE SESSION**

**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.

***At the time of compiling the agenda there were no items for inclusion.***

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.

**Agenda Item 5.**
**Draft Braintree District Sustainable Community and Core Strategy Technical Supplement**

**Contact Details:** Eleanor Dash

**Designation:** Planning Policy Manager

**Ext. No:** 2563

**E Mail Address:** eleanor.dash@braintree.gov.uk

**Background Papers:** Evidence Base Studies (On Planning Policy Website)

**Financial Implications:** Infrastructure improvement costs that will be required to implement the LDF.

**Equalities Implications:** Accessibility issues.

**Legal Implications:** None

**Options:**

- To approve the Technical Supplement to the Sustainable Community and Core Strategy.
- Not to approve the Technical Supplement to the Sustainable Community and Core Strategy.
- To amend the contents of the Technical Supplement to the Sustainable Community and Core Strategy.

**Risks:** That the Core Strategy would not be found sound by the Planning Inspectorate.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This document comprises a Technical Supplement to the combined Community Strategy and Core Strategy. It is proposed that this should be a supporting document to the combined Strategies and will be published together with these Strategies for public consultation on 31<sup>st</sup> October.

- The Technical Supplement sets out background information including the following :-
- An explanation of the new planning system
- The national and regional policy background
- Results of the Issues and Options Consultations
- Conclusions from the evidence base studies
- Conclusions from the strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal
- Key statistics about Braintree District
- Background information on the 3 Guiding Principles
- An assessment of all Peripheral Growth Locations around Braintree and Witham, setting out advantages and disadvantages of each location
- Background to Core Policies
- Background to infrastructure requirements and the delivery of the Strategy
- An explanation of terms

**Recommendation**

To recommend that the Panel approves the Draft Braintree District Sustainable Community and Core Strategy Technical Supplement for public consultation.

**‘One District- One Vision’  
A Strategy for People and Places in the Braintree District to  
2025  
(The Sustainable Core Strategy and Core Strategy)**

**JOINT TECHNICAL SUPPLEMENT**

**Introduction**

**Background to this document**

- **Strategic Spatial Objectives**
- **Theme 1 - Sustainable Development and Spatial Strategy**
- **Theme 2 – Our Environment**
- **Theme 3 – Our Economy**
- **Theme 4 – Our Communities and Services**
- **Theme 5 - Delivering Our Strategy**

## **Contents**

### **Introduction**

Introduction to the Core Strategy .....	4
Spatial Planning –the new system .....	5
National Planning Background.....	5
Regional Planning Strategy .....	5
Other influencing Plans and Strategies.....	5
The Local Development Framework System.....	7
What will this Core Strategy do?.....	8
Saving the existing Local Plan.....	8

### **The background to this document**

The story so far.....	9
The Issues and Options consultation -what you told us.....	9
Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal .....	10
Our Evidence Base.....	11

### **The Community Strategy Vision** .....

### **Braintree today and tomorrow-a portrait of Braintree**.....

### **Braintree 2025- Our Strategic Vision** .....

### **Strategic Spatial Objectives** .....

## **Core Policy Themes**

### **Theme 1 –Sustainable Development and Spatial Strategy**

Part 1 Sustainability Principles.....	21
Part 2 Spatial Principles.....	25
Part 3 Making Efficient use of Land.....	42
Part 4 Transport and Accessibility.....	44

### **Theme 2-Our Environment**

Part 1 Our Natural Environment .....	47
Part 2 Our Built Environment .....	51

### **Theme 3 –Our Economy**

Part 1 The Overall Economic Strategy.....	55
The Rural Economy .....	57
Part 2 Delivering Job Growth and Employment Land Provision.....	58
Part 3 Priorities for Employment and Regeneration .....	60

### **Theme 4 – Our Communities and Services**

Part 1 Delivering the Housing we need .....	68
Part 2 Delivering the Service and Facilities we need .....	76

### **Theme 5 – Delivering Our Strategy**

Part 1 Partnerships for delivery

Part 2 Delivery Mechanisms

**This theme has yet to be drafted and will be inserted in the consultation draft Preferred Options Document.**

## **BRAINTREE'S FUTURE**

### **A new Joint Strategy for Braintree District.**

The recent changes to the Local Development Framework (LDF) planning system have allowed councils to be far more flexible in how they involve the public and stakeholders in making the plans for their areas. Councils can now decide who, how and when to consult.

At the same time government is urging a much more “joined up” approach between Planning and Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) especially at the all important Core Strategy stage.

Braintree is looking to take this approach to new levels by consulting on a JOINT DISTRICT STRATEGY that will set out the Strategy and Action Plans for the LSP and at the same time the Planning Strategy for the District. This will help us to make the proposed planning policies fully compatible with the LSP aspirations and also to secure “buy-in” for the policies from the LSP partners.

### **Consulting on the strategy.**

The Council is keen to involve everyone in the community in this process and to make it as accessible and easy to understand as possible.

We have therefore produced 3 documents which will set out the Strategies in different ways to give different levels of information.

We hope this will allow as many people as possible to take part in the process.

## THIS TECHNICAL SUPPLEMENT

This Technical Supplement sets out in more detail the background to the proposals and policies that are being put forward for the Core Strategy.

It follows the same general layout as the main consultation document .

### **This document sets out :**

- the various parts of the planning system,
- the national and regional planning policy background,
- the results of the earlier consultations and the emerging evidence base.

The main part of the document sets out a series of Policy themes which set out the Preferred Policies which the Council thinks should be taken forward as its planning strategy for the future of the District .It also sets out a number of alternatives that have also been considered but have been rejected at this stage.

Each Theme sets out:

- A list of the evidence we are using to decide which policies to choose.
- The background and rationale to the theme and policies
- The draft policies themselves

### **Spatial Planning -The new system**

In 2004 the Government introduced a new planning system across the country. It Introduced the concept of “**spatial planning**”.

This is intended to take a broader approach to the planning of our towns, villages and communities than before.

The government have set out a useful general definition of Spatial Planning.

***'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 function. This will include policies which can impact on land use, for example, by influencing the demands on or needs for development, but which are not capable of being delivered solely or mainly through the granting of planning permission and may be delivered through other means,' (ODPM, 2004, pp3).***

This means that the Council has to work with all sections of the community, especially local service providers and developers, to agree and deliver a common way forward for the District.



### **The governments national planning policies**

Although Braintree Council is responsible for the future direction of local planning policy and decision making as set out in the Core Strategy, it cannot do so in isolation. It must make sure that the plan is compatible with higher level policies.

The government sets out as series of Planning Policy Statements (PPS) that apply across the country. The Council must take account of the latest version of those policies when preparing its own plans.

***The most relevant national policies are listed at the start of each Theme***

### **The East of England Plan**

The East of England Plan (Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)) has recently been approved by the Government.

The plan sets out the following requirements for Braintree district.

#### **Housing**

- Provide for a minimum of 4,340 houses to be built in the District between 2006 and 2021 (about 290 a year)
- Provide for another 385 houses per year to be built in the District after 2021
- Secure more affordable housing in the District-the plan says a target of 35% affordable housing should be delivered

#### **Employment**

- Contribute towards the 56,000 jobs to be delivered in the “Rest of ESSEX” (which includes Braintree, Chelmsford, Uttlesford and Maldon)

#### **The Environment**

- Make sure that development in the district does not have unacceptable impacts on the important internationally recognised wildlife areas of the Colne and Blackwater estuaries.

***Most of the policies in the East of England Plan apply to Braintree to some extent, but the most relevant are listed at the start of each Theme***

### **Other plans and strategies that have been taken into account**

The new “spatial” approach to planning means that other plans and programmes from other organisations have to be taken into account when deciding on policies and where developments should take place. Coordination of other plans and programmes can help to make sure that sustainable development is secured in the future. It also means that they can be used to help deliver the objectives of the Core Strategy through the actions of a range of other organisations.

The most significant organisations, policies and programmes include:

Other District Council Local Development Frameworks. Colchester and Chelmsford are of particular relevance as they are major sub regional centre's and growth points.

The County Council-education, social services, local transport, waste

The Environment Agency-environmental quality (especially water quality)

The Highways Agency- the strategic highway network

The Mid Essex Primary Care Health Trust- health service provision.

The Water Supply Companies ( Anglian Water and Essex and Suffolk Water) - the delivery of water supplies and sewage systems

***The most relevant plans and strategies are listed at the start of each Theme.***

## **THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK SYSTEM**

The LDF is made up of series of DOCUMENTS dealing with different levels or types of planning.

This Core Strategy is the first and most important of these, as it sets out the overall planning framework into which all others must fit. The diagram below shows the other documents in the system and how they fit together.

A short description of each type of document is given in the “Planning Terms Explained” One District One Vision Appendix 2.

### **LDF system diagram**

To be inserted

## **The purpose of the Core Strategy**

The Core Strategy is the key “umbrella” document of the new LDF. It will:

- Be the basis for all the other policy and guidance documents.
- Provide the spatial policy framework for development and change in Braintree district for the period to 2025 and,
- Establish the key principles which should guide the location, use, form and delivery of development.

The Core Strategy will eventually comprise:

- a locally distinct vision of the district in 2025;
- a Key Diagram showing the proposed pattern of development across the district;
- a small suite of policies , grouped under broad “Themes” , setting out how that vision will be achieved through decisions made about different land uses, and the location , form and management of development.
- a clear explanation as to how the delivery of this development will be achieved

It is important to note that the Core Strategy will not identify specific sites for development, nor will it set out detailed policies for development control decisions. However it will show the general areas where development will be promoted, or conversely where it will be restricted and also set out broad policies for promoting or restricting development. .

Site specific allocations or detailed policy areas, plus development control policies will be brought forward later in separate Development Plan Documents (DPDs).

### **Saving the existing Adopted Local Plan**

When the CS is adopted it will replace significant parts of the adopted Local Plan. The majority of the policies in the Local plan Review have been saved in accordance with the government regulations. The rest will gradually be replaced by new LDF documents.

As it was only recently reviewed, many of the guiding principles of the Local Plan are still relevant and will be incorporated into the Core Strategy.

Many site allocations in the Local Plan Review have not yet been delivered.

The Development Control Policies Document will replace the saved Local Plan Review policies in due course.

### **THE BACKGROUND TO THIS STRATEGY**

Before reaching this stage in producing this plan, the Council has done much work. It has :

- Consulted on the Issues to be tackled and the wide range of options that may be available to do so.
- Assessed the possible impacts on the environment of those options
- Undertaken a series of in depth technical studies to inform its consideration of preferred options.

The main relevant conclusions from each are also set out under each Theme.

### **The Issues and Options consultation –the main conclusions**

The Issues and Options document (regulation 25) was published for consultation in April /May 2007 for a period of 6 weeks. In all 1174 responses were received.

The main outcomes of the consultation are set out below

- Most support for “Where ideas take shape” ,mixed with “A focus on leisure, heritage and nature” as future “Visions” for the district.
- Most support for using existing commitments and urban concentration for new growth,
- Some support for development in the larger villages.
- General opposition to a new settlement
- Support for stronger policies to deliver more affordable housing
- Support for a new strategic employment area or business park, the retention of existing employment areas and the development of some existing or vacant employment sites for other uses.
- Support for additional employment in rural areas.
- Support for the promotion and improvement of non-car transport.
- Support for improvements to the A12, A120, and a new Halstead by pass.
- Support for additional car parking in town centres and railway stations.

- Support for containing Braintree, Witham and Halstead the town centres but also promoting some important regeneration initiatives.
- Broad support for the continued provision of health care, schooling, education and sports.
- Concern over the level of policing, especially in rural areas.
- Support for environmental and landscape protection
- Support for standard charges to provide infrastructure subject to evidence of need.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal (SEA/SA)-**

The appraisal of the Core Strategy is an ongoing and vital part of its production and is required by the regulations.

The appraisal of Braintree's CS is being undertaken by Essex County Council.

The Issues and Options Document was the first to be appraised and the main conclusions and recommendations on that exercise are set out below.

These have been an important part of the decision making process for the Preferred Options.

### ***Conclusions and Recommendations***

*The Issues and Options document sets out a range of realistic issues and options for consultation purposes before development of a preferred option strategy. The issues and options set out in the document are unlikely to lead to large scale significant adverse effects beyond those identified in the appraisal.*

*The District Council, in considering the responses to the consultation on the Document and preparing the preferred strategy option, is recommended to consider,*

- *including an environmental dimension in the Vision for the District;*
- *the alignment between the settlement strategy and the economic and transport strategy for the District;*
- *the alignment between the spatial strategy for the District and the associated topic based policies;*
- *undertaking further appraisal of possible preferred development locations, once the scale and distribution of development arising from commitments and the Urban Capacity Study is known;*
- *undertaking an Employment Land Review and, subsequently, a further appraisal of possible employment locations;*
- *undertaking a further appraisal of site options if provision is to be made for large scale wind turbines;*
- *discussion with transport and service authorities and operators to define infrastructure and services required to support the preferred option strategy;*
- *the alignment between the preferred option strategy and the requirements for its implementation in a sustainable manner;*

- *seeking a screening opinion on the need for appropriate assessment of possible effects on nearby European sites under the Habitats Directive.*

## **THE EVIDENCE BASE**

To help with the preparation of this Preferred Options draft of the Core Strategy, the Council has assembled and considered a wide body of technical evidence. This evidence has enabled a robust and realistic series of options to be prepared for discussion in this document.

The main outcomes are listed below, but further information is also set out in the text of the main Theme headings.

### **The Environment**

#### **Landscape Character Assessment**

This study looks at the character and sensitivity of the landscape of the district and suggests ways that development may be accommodated.

*Main outcomes :* There are extensive areas of high quality landscape, especially to the north of the district but some areas around Witham and Braintree could accommodate development if sensitively handled. The areas round Halstead are somewhat more sensitive so development would be more difficult to accommodate.

#### **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment**

This study looks at the risks of flooding across the district

*Main outcomes :* There are no proposed growth locations subject to high flood risk but development of some may be reduced by identified localised flooding areas. Some urban sites within the main towns and villages could also be affected by localised flood risk. This could affect the amount of development (mainly housing) that can be located in the existing urban areas, which may influence the amount of greenfield land needed in the longer term.

#### **Water Cycle Study**

This study looks at the supply of water to the district and how waste and sewerage should be dealt with from potential development location

*Main outcomes :* There is likely to be no major issue with water supply over the plan period. Waste water/sewage disposal may require improvements to local sewage works and systems dependant on the location and scale of new development. This will impact mainly on the west side of Braintree .

#### **Appropriate Assessment**

This study assesses the potential impacts of development in the district on the European sites of the Blackwater and Colne estuaries.

*Main outcomes :* There are likely to be no significant direct impacts on the Blackwater sites.

## **Draft Braintree Green Spaces Strategy**

This study looks the current supply of public green spaces across the district and suggests where improvements or additions may be needed.

*Main relevant outcomes:*

The Braintree Green Spaces Strategy supports and promotes :

- Improving the **quality** of green spaces in Braintree District.
- Establishing an effective strategy for the **delivery** of green spaces and sport and recreation facilities.
- Informing future **planning, management and maintenance policies** for green spaces, including the emerging Local Development Documents for the period to 2021 and beyond.
- Conserving and enhancing the **natural environment** and encouraging biodiversity.
- Conserving the **historic environment** and encouraging **cultural activities** where appropriate.
- Moving towards more **sustainable grounds maintenance** and reducing the need for chemical pesticides and herbicides.

The Green Spaces Strategy also has the following relevant objectives:

- To make green spaces accessible to all.
- To raise the profile of green spaces and to promote their benefit to the District and secure greater use and involvement by the local community.

## **Housing**

### **Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)**

This study looks at the overall housing market in Braintree ( and in north east Essex as a whole) and assesses current an likely future needs , including in particular for affordable housing.

*Main outcomes :* There is a need for considerably more affordable housing than is currently being delivered.

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

This study looks at the potential for the of delivery of housing across the district, including site constraints and marketability

*Main outcomes:* This study is ongoing at the time of preparing this document. The outcomes will be used to inform the final submission Core Strategy.

## **The Local Economy**

### **Two Economic Studies and an Employment Land Review**

*Main outcomes:* The districts' economy should be diversified and out-commuting reduced if possible. Tourism and business innovation should be targeted for special support. Some existing employment sites could be redeveloped for other uses.

### **Retail Study**

Thus study looked at the current retailing structure of the main towns and suggested how retailing should be developed in the future

*Main outcomes:*

No major expansion of retailing is needed in the main towns or key service villages.

Enhancement of certain key locations in the centres would be desirable.

There is no need for any further out of centre retailing development.

## **Transport**

### **Transportation Study**

Thus study assessed the traffic impacts of potential growth locations

*Main outcomes :* The proposed growth locations would be acceptable in principle, subject to local highway improvements ( including to the local junctions to the A120 and A12 trunk roads ), and the limitation of the scale of development and the uses involved, especially in relation to employment uses onto the A12.



## **THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY VISION**

The “Joining up” of the planning strategy and LSP Sustainable Community Strategy is vital to the governments new approach to planning.

Braintree LSP has recently adopted the following new Vision and Aims for the district which the Planning Strategy will use as its starting point.

*‘One District – One Vision’*

### **The Overall Vision for the Braintree District**

***‘To improve, promote and support the well-being of people and communities in the Braintree District – ensuring that local needs are met and are balanced against our duty to protect the District’s special environmental qualities – now and for future generations’***

## **The Aims**

- \* ***‘To plan for the sustainable future development of the District’***
- \* ***To create a clean and green environment***
- \* ***To achieve a prosperous local economy***
- \* ***To enable everyone to enjoy a safe and healthy lifestyle***

## **DELIVERING THE VISIONS- THE KEY OBJECTIVES**

The following twelve key objectives have been developed which reflect and underpin the two visions for Braintree District.

These objectives form the basis for the policies set out in this Strategy – particularly the planning policies - and will be used by those making decisions about the District in the coming years:

The key objectives are:

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 secure developments that make the minimum use of scarce natural resources, both in construction and everyday use
3. To accord with national and regional policies, and in particular, accommodate the future housing and employment growth requirements of the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy

4. 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
5. 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
6. 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
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 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
10. 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
11. To protect the countryside and improve and manage the diversity of wildlife and habitats, and protect and improve open spaces within our towns and villages
12. To provide accessible and varied opportunities for leisure and recreational activities in order to promote healthy lifestyles and social inclusion.

## **THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT TODAY AND TOMORROW-**

### **A PORTRAIT OF THE DISTRICT**

#### **KEY STATISTICS**

This part of the document summarises some of the key facts, statistics and details about the Braintree District and puts the Core Strategy proposals in the rest of the document into perspective.

- The Braintree District covers an area of 612 square kilometres
- It is the second largest district (by area) in Essex
- It has the fourth highest population of Districts in Essex. The mid-year estimate for 2007 was 140,900
- The population of the Braintree District is set to increase over the next 5 years. The percentage difference in the 65 and over age group is predicted to increase by 14%
- Nearly half the population live in the rural areas and just under half in the three main towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead
- There are over 3,000 listed buildings and 39 conservation areas
- The unemployment rate in the District was 1.9% in 2006/07- well below the national average.
- 28% of the working age population have no qualifications
- 43% of people of working age travel outside the district to work (2001)
- 82% of residents own at least 1 car (2001)
- Most crime is reducing (NOTE – insert more detail and evidence base)
- House prices are slightly lower than the Essex average but are mainly higher than the regional average (December 2006)

## **The District in the Region**

Braintree District is at the heart of rural Essex. At the same time it lies between the Cambridge, Colchester, Chelmsford group of key regional centres, and is close to the fast-growing Stansted Airport. London is only 3/4 hr away by road or rail so there is a significant “London effect”.

This location, with its attractive countryside, characterful towns and many historic villages has made Braintree an attractive place to live and provides the opportunity for realising a prosperous future with a high quality of life.

## **Population**

The total estimated population for Braintree as at mid 2007 is 140,900 and will increase further over the next 5 years. As with the population nationally, the average age is rising (80 years on average across the district ) and this will put pressure of services such as health and social services in the years to come. Similarly the numbers of young people are falling, with implications for education ( especially rural schools) and ultimately, family housing.

## **Health and deprivation**

Braintree is a generally healthy district. People are living longer and death rates are falling steadily. However there are still pockets of deprivation and growing concerns over obesity and continued smoking.

## **The environment**

Braintree is a very attractive and historic part of Essex . The vast majority of the district's area is rural, with much high quality landscape, green townscapes, over 3000 listed buildings and 39 conservation areas. This environmental quality contributes much to the overall character of this part of Essex and indeed to the region as a whole. Balancing future development needs with the protection of these sensitive and often fragile environments, will be a critical part of the task of promoting and achieving sustainable development and a high quality of life of everyone who lives in and visits the district.

## **Climate change**

Although climate change is accepted as being a global phenomenon it impacts are felt locally and tackling it is at the core of national and regional policies. Various ways of measuring or defining climate change have been put forward, but the “Ecological Footprint” is a useful way of measuring a population's effect on the environment.

The Ecological Footprint for the world is 2.2 global hectares per person but the UK average is 5.4 global hectares per person. This is 65% higher than the ecological budget (the sustainable amount available). The Ecological Footprint for the Braintree District as at 2002 was just below 5.5 global hectares per person (Stockholm Environment Institute). There is therefore work to be done to reduce this level of impact from the residents of the district.

In 2004 Essex produced a total of 10,131 kilo tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup>, which equates to 8.5 tonnes per capita. This is almost 1 tonne per person per year less than the UK average (9.2 per capita). The Braintree District produced an average of 7.49

tonnes per capita which is almost 1.75 tonnes per person per year less than the UK average and is due to the largely rural character of the district which produces relatively low levels of emission from industrial and commercial sources.

### **Communities and services**

The attractiveness of the district, and its proximity to London and Stansted, has led to pressure for development, especially housing, which in turn has and this has contributed to high levels of out-commuting from the district. This has also led to higher than average house price inflation, with prices higher than the Eastern region average, with consequent problems of affordability in market housing. The delivery of affordable housing has therefore emerged as a major issue in the district, and much higher levels will be needed in the future to meet projected needs, especially if young people are to be encouraged to stay rather than leave the district. .

Despite the significantly lower level of housing requirement in the East of England Plan and the current downturn in the market it is anticipated that new market housing will continue to be delivered at a higher level than the East of England plan for up to the next 10 years as existing commitments, including many sites in the urban areas, are developed.

The planning for, and delivery of, the necessary services and facilities to support the district's future housing and population growth will present significant challenges, not least because the majority of such provision will be outside the direct control of this council. New or expanded schools, health, community facilities and other local services will all be needed and will have to be planned for

The only major piece of strategic transport infrastructure which is identified to be provided over the plan period is the A120 link to Marks Tey, but this is long way from fruition.

The branch railway line from Witham to Braintree is limited by the lack of a passing place.

Although at the extreme southern edge of the district, the A12 has a significant impact on the environment of Witham and the nearby villages of Hatfield Peverel and Kelvedon. Minor works are proposed to improve junction capacity .

The currently anticipated scale of new development makes any further strategic infrastructure requirements unlikely, but there is considerable potential for planning to secure improvements to local services and links plus the upgrading of the railway line.

### **Education and Skills**

In Essex less than a quarter (14.8%) of its residents have a level 4 or above qualification below the England percent of 19.9%. The Braintree District fairs worse than this with only 14.6% achieving this level.

28.0% of the working age population in the Braintree District have no qualifications. This compares with the figure for Essex which stands at 29.3%.

Improvements are therefore needed to educational attainment to both help the life prospects of those who may leave school with few qualifications, and also to help the local economy with a better qualified workforce.

### **The economy**

Overall, Braintree is a prosperous district, with a low unemployment rate of 4.0% (January 2007) compared with a regional average of 4.5% and a UK average of 5.3%. However many people, especially those in the villages, commute outside the district with London being a major attractor.

These factors have led to an imbalance in the number and types of jobs to cater for the residents of the District, and to support the high housing growth of recent times. The priorities for achieving a more sustainable economic future for the District must now be education, skills training, the generation of higher value local jobs, and a reversal , or at least reduction, of out-commuting.

## **THE THREE GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The principle of “sustainability” is at the heart of national policy, the LDF system, and also the new Sustainable Community Strategies.

Three “Guiding Principles” have been identified from the Visions and Key Objectives, which are at the heart of the Core Strategy, and will form the basis for all other policies in this and future planning documents.

These are:

- **Promoting and Delivering A Sustainable Future**
- **The Protection And Enhancement Of The District’s Natural And Built Environments**
- **Delivering The Development We Need**

## **THE 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.
- Policies E1 and H1 set out the housing and employment requirements for the district.
- Policy ENV3 requires that sites of international importance for nature conservation be protected as much as possible.

### **Statutory stakeholders consulted**

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

### **The LSP Sustainable Community Strategy**

The Strategy as whole will support the delivery of a sustainable future for the District.

### **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.

### **Relevant technical studies**

All studies are relevant to some extent, however the main ones are:

- 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**

#### **To be added**

#### **Guiding Principle 1: Promoting And Delivering A Sustainable Future**

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.

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.”*

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

The primary function of the Joint 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.

**The Planning Strategy** can promote sustainability in a number of ways:.

In individual developments, the use of renewable or less environmentally damaging materials will save energy and cut costs

By placing homes, jobs, services and facilities in the main towns and larger villages close to where most people live, it will help to reduce travel distances to



work and encourage us to be healthier by making walking and cycling easier and reducing car use. Making sure that everyone has the services they need nearby can also promote local community spirit.

However, nearly half of residents live in the smaller villages and the countryside, so their needs must also be recognized. This must however 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 Sustainable Community Strategy** can also promote sustainability in other ways:

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 Joint 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.

**All the other Policies in this Strategy are based on this Strategic Principle**

#### **'GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1 - PROMOTING AND DELIVERING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

**The Braintree District Local Strategic Partnership and Braintree District Council will seek to ensure that all development will contribute to (or at least not be harmful to) the promotion and delivery of sustainable development throughout the district and, where appropriate, support regional, national, and international strategies.**

In particular the following will be promoted or secured :

- ❑ the ongoing support of rural communities so that they can remain viable and have at least the basic level of day to day services required
- ❑ the creation of locally distinctive, sustainable, safe, healthy, vibrant and successful communities
- ❑ the provision of jobs, services, facilities and infrastructure to meet defined future needs of the district
- ❑ development that minimises the use of scarce resources and the causes and impacts of climate change
- ❑ the best use of land for all types of development, so that the optimum use is made of suitable sites, especially those within Braintree, Witham and Halstead and the key service villages'

## **Possible alternatives and the reasons why they have not been chosen:**

The promotion of sustainable development is a national regional and local priority. Sustainability requirements must therefore be included in the Strategy and be delivered locally.

- A first alternative approach could be to amend the wording by loosening the wording from “SEEK TO SECURE” to a “REQUIREMENT” for the principles set out to be met.

This would be more prescriptive, and to an extent less flexible. However, it would also emphasise the Council's and its partner's commitment to this critical part of the Strategy.

- A second alternative would be not to include this principle on the grounds that it simply repeats national and regional policies. However it is felt that the principles are so fundamental to this Strategy that they should be spelled out clearly at the outset. 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

### **Guiding Principle 2: The Protection And Enhancement Of The District's Natural And Built Environments**

The protection of the environment is at the heart of securing sustainable development for the future. National and regional policies both emphasise this as a means of supporting biodiversity, creating the highest quality environments for people to live and making the best use of resources.

The protection and improvement of our countryside and historic environments have also been clear concerns from our consultations and this fits well with both national and regional policies.

This is Principle is important because:

- promoting sustainable development means recognising :
  - the importance of protecting the high quality of our countryside, and the historic importance of many of the Districts' towns and villages
  - the Districts' rich natural heritage and location near to the heavily protected Blackwater and Colne estuaries ,and which could be affected by development in the district
- The protection of the environment was consistently highlighted as a clear priority in all of the consultation that was carried out
- There is a need to strike a balance between providing for the development of housing, jobs and services and protecting and enhancing the environment

- An important way of achieving this balance is to make sure that all new development reaches the highest standards of design and layout. This will be particularly important in or near to the historic villages or on the edges of the towns where development could affect sensitive landscapes
- It is important to make sure that open spaces are created and protected to add to peoples' quality of life by providing formal and natural places in which to play and relax.

**A more detailed Policy justification is set out in the Environment Theme.**

#### **'GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2 - PROTECTING AND ENHANCING OUR DISTRICT'S ENVIRONMENT**

- ❑ **The high quality of the natural and built environment of the district will be protected and enhanced, and new developments will create attractive, high quality places.**
- ❑ **Historic features and important natural habitats will be preserved and enhanced**
- ❑ **The environment of the District will be planned and managed to support a high quality of life of residents and in particular to support and encourage healthy lifestyles.'**

#### **Possible alternatives and the reasons why they have not been chosen:**

The protection of the environment is at the heart of national planning policy and central to the promotion of sustainable development. The high quality of our own environment makes this principle of prime importance to our future community and planning strategies.

We think that there is no realistic alternative to the broad thrust of this principle, especially given the importance of the rural areas and our historic towns and villages to the character and future of our district.

However it will be possible to consider some changes to the wording to clarify or tighten it.

#### **Guiding Principle 3 – Delivering the development we need**

##### **Requirements for Housing**

The RSS sets out a minimum requirement of 4340 dwellings to be delivered from 2006 to 2021. This equates to around 290 units per year.

However it also requires provision after 2021 to be based upon a continuation of planned annual rates 2001- 2021 or 2006-2021, whichever is the higher. This equates to 385 units per year

***The application of the higher rate gives a overall minimum requirement for Braintree up to 2025 of 5600.***

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 likely to be higher, even with the current conditions in the housing market, as sites with planning permissions are developed.

As the East of England Plan requirement is to be regarded as a minimum, 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 accepts the East of England Plan requirement as a minimum to be achieved, particularly where this will secure key objectives of this strategy such as affordable housing and the provision of infrastructure.

### **Delivery of New Jobs**

The RSS sets 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. Chelmsford proposes to deliver some 20,000 jobs through its recently approved Core Strategy.

Two recent studies of the local economy 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. This equates well with the 20,000 jobs in the Chelmsford Core Strategy. 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.

### **Services, Facilities and Regeneration**

To support the houses and jobs, there will need to be a wide range of services and facilities, such as shopping, local transport improvements, leisure, health and education. Some of these are already sufficient but there is likely to be a need for improvements or expansion to cater for the growth.

Finally the Council is keen to promote the regeneration of key sites in the main town centres and key villages, which are not fulfilling their economic, social and environmental potential.

All developments will impact in some way on the local environment so it will be important that they meet the principles 1 and 2 set out above.

***More detailed policy justifications on the proposed levels and types of development across the district, are set out in the relevant themes***

### **Guiding Principle 3 – Delivering the Development we need**

(Guiding Principle 3 (GP3))

- **Development will be promoted that contributes towards the requirements of the East of England Plan, especially with regard to:**
  - **The delivery of 5,880 dwellings up to 2025 with a target of at least 35% being affordable**
  - **The promotion of local employment and appropriate economic development to contribute towards the 56,000 jobs in the ‘rest of Essex’**
  - **The regeneration of key sites in the main towns and key service villages**
- **Development will be promoted and delivered that will secure the required services, facilities and infrastructure needed to support the growth in housing and the local economy**

#### **Possible alternatives and the reasons why they have not been chosen:**

The District has to plan for at least the level of growth set out in the East of England Plan, improve on its delivery of affordable housing and seek to promote the regeneration of key sites.

The delivery of the necessary services and facilities must be part of this growth.

There are considered to be no realistic alternatives to this principle but minor changes to the wording could be considered.

## Planning for the future of Braintree District- The Hierarchy of Places

This section sets out how the Strategic Principles have been used set out the proposed hierarchy and future roles of our main towns and villages and how future development will be related to them.

### **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 which 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 Community Strategy Priorities**

The Community Strategy generally supports the pricelessness of sustainable development which have been used to inform and guide the decisions on the hierarchy of settlements

#### **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.

### **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.

### **Background to the proposals**

National Policies, especially PPS1 , support the distribution of development in the most sustainable locations to enable the best access for the most people and to protect the environment.

### **The East of England Plan**

Policy SS4 gives clear guidance as to how development and growth should be distributed across the region given that it is mostly countryside and that most places are either small towns or villages.

As this Core Strategy should be in general accord with the East of England Plan, the spatial distribution of development and services should follow this guidance unless there are good reasons for not doing so.

The guidance is particularly relevant to the Braintree District in relation to what it says about the types of settlement that are represented in the district.

These are Market Towns, Key Service Centres and other smaller villages

***What the East of England Plan says about Market Towns:***

That away from the Key Centres (such as Colchester and Chelmsford) most development should be located in selected **market towns**..... *‘with the potential to increase their economic and social sustainability through measures to:*

- *support urban and rural renaissance;*
- *secure appropriate amounts of new housing, including affordable housing, local employment and other facilities; and*
- *improve the town’s accessibility, especially by public transport’.*

There are three places that best meet this description of Market Towns in the Braintree District . These are :

- Braintree
- Witham
- Halstead

However, as well as bring important locally, these places play a key role in serving wider hinterlands. Braintree in particular has a wider role outside the district because of its central location and greater range of services, especially shopping; Witham serves villages in parts of Colchester and Chelmsford and Maldon districts, whilst Halstead serves the numerous small villages across the northern rural areas.

Therefore, to underline both their importance to the district, where they are the main centres for housing, jobs and services, and also to places outside the district, we are proposing to call them the “Main Towns” as opposed to “Market Towns”.

***What the East of England Plan says about Key Service Centres***

These larger villages can perform a useful service role and accommodate some housing and employment. It defines Key Service Centres as:.....

*‘large villages with a good level of services, which might include:*

- *a primary school within the settlement and a secondary school within the settlement or easily accessible by public transport;*
- *primary health care facilities;*



- *a range of retail and service provision capable of meeting day-to-day needs, particularly for convenience shopping;*
- *local employment opportunities; and*
- *frequent public transport to higher order settlements’.*

The places which best meet this definition in the District are:

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

The 2008 Rural Services Survey shows that these villages retain all the key facilities and services to support the surrounding local communities for their day to day needs and are also reasonably accessible by public transport . However, Steeple Bumpstead at the extreme northern edge of the district close to Haverhill, whilst having all services , is relatively isolated with a poor public transport . For this reason it is not being proposed as a Key Service Village.

Recognising the importance of these larger villages will help to secure the retention of those services and facilities and will allow for appropriate development to support local housing need and employment.

However the majority of these villages are based on long established, and historic rural settlements with distinct characters which are recognised and valued locally and beyond. Many have a large number of listed buildings and all, apart from Hatfield Peverel, has a Conservation Area.

In recognition of these factors it is proposed to designate them as **Key Service Villages** rather than Key Service Centres. This will guide the future levels and types of development to that which is appropriate for their historic character.

### ***What the East of England Plan says about the smaller villages***

*The Plan says that :...”many small villages have very limited local services and are dependent on key service centres, market towns, and main urban areas for everyday needs. They should essentially support local agricultural and rural economy and provide village services and local affordable housing”.*

There are many such villages in the district which are currently defined in the adopted Local Plan by a village envelope. They are particularly numerous in the northern part of the district where there are only two Key Service Villages, and so are also important in catering for the day to day needs of their residents and many have a good range of

services. Access by public transport is often less regular so the use of the car tends to predominate.

Small scale development within the existing envelopes can be acceptable especially if it supports local services and jobs. Local needs affordable housing may be appropriate depending on the village and site proposed. Large scale development would not be considered sustainable.

The remainder of the settlements in the district are the large number of very small villages or hamlets that have few or no local services apart from perhaps a village hall or pub. These are not defined in the adopted local plan and are currently deemed to be in the rural areas. Many are very remote with poor public transport access. More development, especially of housing, in those very small villages would probably not be considered sustainable.

### ***What the East of England Plan says about development in the countryside***

The plan says little about development in the countryside, apart from the need to protect the rural environment and support agriculture. .

Braintree is a very rural district and many people either live or work in the countryside. Development in the open countryside raises a number of problems, such as access and impact on the rural environment, but that does not mean that all forms of development should be prevented. Indeed the preservation of local rural jobs and services is an important part of the district's economic strategy. A careful balance must therefore be struck between protecting the countryside and supporting appropriate development that can and should be located there.

### ***Is the East of England Plan approach set out above right for the Braintree District?***

The towns and villages in Braintree District meet the descriptions of the nature and roles of market towns, key service centres, and other villages as set out in the RSS.

### **Other evidence**

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests strongly that location development at the main towns and key service villages will best meet sustainability criteria and objectives.

The Issues and Option Report responses and technical studies all indicate that this approach would be the most suitable overall for the district.

### ***It is proposed that :***

**THE PLACES IN THE DISTRICT WILL BE DEFINED IN ORDER OF SIZE, FUNCTION AND IMPORTANCE AS SET OUT BELOW. THIS "HIERARCHY" WILL GUIDE WHERE AND WHAT DEVELOPMENT WILL TAKE PLACE:**

### **Main Towns**

- Braintree,
- Witham
- Halstead

It is proposed that the main towns should be in that order of importance, to reflect their size, location and potential for future development.

### **Key Service Villages**

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

No order of importance is being suggested for these villages as the scale and type of development will depend on their character, location, local need and development potential .

### **Other villages**

At the present time it is proposed that all the villages that are defined by a “village envelope” in the Local Plan should be on this list.

No order of importance is being proposed for these villages.

### **The rural areas**

All remaining villages or hamlets are too small, or isolated to be defined for any future development. It is proposed that they should continue to be considered to be in the rural areas for the purposes of future development.

In terms of the countryside, it is proposed that development should continue to be restricted to that which needs to be there, is sustainable, and will not damage the environment.

### **The way forward to a strategy**

Consequently, whilst it is clear that the district will continue to develop and change, we think that this change can and should reflect the RSS policy , and be planned to reflect the character and spread of development as it is today.

We also think that the importance and quality of our environment, and the relatively low level of growth needed compared to neighbouring districts, means that the protection of our countryside and heritage should be at the heart of our strategy.

This reinforces the view that required development should be directed towards the most sustainable locations in the main towns and larger villages.

There is no justification therefore for setting out a fundamentally different pattern of development in the future from that which exists today.

Even if the scale of development should alter in the future we think that this approach would still be valid.

## **THE PREFERRED SPATIAL STRATEGY**

### **The Preferred Strategy will have two main elements:**

- ***To preserve and enhance the character of the rural heartland of the district, its countryside and villages, by only supporting development that is needed to make settlements and the rural economy more sustainable and protect and enhance the environment.***

**The open countryside** forms the bulk of the area of the district and gives it its essentially tranquil and unspoilt character, with many extensive views over fields, woodlands and river valleys. It consists largely of farms, some small employment sites, scattered individual houses and very small hamlets. This special character and attractiveness will be protected, preserved, and enhanced. Development will therefore be severely restricted, unless it is necessary to support agriculture, other important parts of the rural economy, and will be acceptable in the countryside. Environmental enhancement initiatives, including broadening public access and protecting/ improving biodiversity will be supported and encouraged.

**The smaller rural villages** make up most of settlements in the district. Many are also historic and attractive places which attract large numbers of visitors so are important tourist attractors. They also offer a range of local community services and mainly small scale job opportunities based on local service trades. Development will be of a scale and type to cater for these purely local needs, unless there are exceptional reasons for supporting developments that make a significant contribution to the wider economy or environment.

### **The Key Service Villages**

These villages are Coggeshall, Earls Colne, Hatfield Peverel, Kelvedon, Silver End, and Sible Hedingham. They also cater for many day to day shopping and other needs and offer a range of local jobs many of which cater for visitors. There are also some specific opportunities for the regeneration of outmoded or vacant commercial sites.

These villages will be allowed to develop and change so they can continue to perform a useful role as local service centres for the surrounding rural areas and small villages, especially in the remoter parts of the district. Appropriate development in these villages will therefore be supported, together with other partnership initiatives, to help secure their continued sustainability, make sure that jobs and services are kept and if possible improved, and their historic character enhanced.

*Some limited market housing to help support these services will also be allowed on suitable sites in the villages, and affordable housing to serve local needs will be supported.*

- **To concentrate the bulk of new development and services at the main towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead .**
- **All the towns will support significant development within their existing urban areas.**
- **New greenfield growth will be at Braintree and Witham only.**

***Braintree will reinforce its role as the main town of the district by accommodating significant greenfield and urban growth and development. Housing, employment and local services /facilities will all be developed, improved or promoted, as will major town centre regeneration projects to include shopping , public transport improvements and other services.***

*Braintree is the largest town in the district and has the widest range of services and facilities. There is the potential however to enhance the town to make it a true centre for the whole district.*

*Braintree is an historic town with a wealth of attractive buildings and a compact, character, town centre. It has a thriving retail core ,which includes George Yard, the market, a wide range of independent shops and several large food stores. The Freeport factory outlet centre to the south of the town centre adds to Braintree shopping attractiveness.*

*Nevertheless the town centre would benefit from upgrading if it is to achieve its economic and environmental potential, so the regeneration of key sites will be promoted.*

*Employment at Braintree is a mix of established and new. The Skyline development south of the A120 is being developed, and there are several high quality and more traditional industrial/commercial estates around the town periphery, which are valuable and should be retained. However older premises also exist that have been identified as being not fit for current and future business needs so there are opportunities for redevelopment for alternative uses.*

*Recent improvements to the A120 have opened up access to the M11 and Stansted which has benefited Braintree's economy. However the proximity of the A120 to the town causes local traffic problems that need to be resolved. In the long term, the improvements to the Braintree-Marks Tey section will help in this regard, but opportunities should be taken to deal with these in the shorter term .*

New services at Braintree include a new swimming pool, and a just-commenced community hospital. There are proposals to expand Notley High School.

Braintree has also expanded significantly in recent years but there remains potential for about another 2600 dwellings within the urban area, although some sites may be subject to flood risk.

The landscape around Braintree is low key but attractive and provides a fine setting for the town. However there are areas where growth could be located if tackled sensitively with due regard for its impact, especially on longer views on the edge of the town. There are no other major constraints to development.

**Witham will accommodate significant growth and development in and around the edge of the town, to secure housing, employment and town centre regeneration, plus the required facilities including healthcare, school expansion/rationalization and other community facilities.**

Witham is the second centre of the district. The town has excellent transport links, being on the A12 and mainline railway to London and the East Coast. It has a good range of local convenience shops plus supermarkets and a range of comparison shops although residents tend to look to Braintree, Colchester and Chelmsford for major services and main comparison shopping.

Witham is an historic market town, but parts of the town centre would benefit from upgrading and/or regeneration, especially around the Newlands Centre area. There is therefore considerable potential for new development and allied environmental enhancements to add to the character of the town.

Witham's housing has been expanded significantly in recent years and the Maltings Lane development to the southwest of the town centre remains to be completed.

There are large local employment areas that trade off the good transport link, and these have some potential for expansion.

Health facilities are however limited and would benefit from improvement. The Primary Care Trust is currently investigating options for such improvements. Schools may benefit from expansion and/or rationalisation, partly due to the recent housing expansion, in addition to the already approved school at Maltings Lane. There is also a need to regenerate and/or upgrade existing sports/leisure facilities.

The surrounding landscape is not as varied as the rest of the district, being somewhat closer to the coast, but the southern landscape has its own character around the Blackwater and Brain valleys where there has been considerable minerals extraction and where further potential remains. There may be potential for long term recreation use of those area, although it is somewhat isolated from the town by the A12.

*The landscape to the north of the town is somewhat less sensitive and could accommodate suitable growth outside the current urban area.*

*The urban capacity study shows that Witham can accommodate about 3000 new dwellings in its existing boundaries, and potential for employment expansion also remains.*

*Witham therefore possesses the ingredients of a sustainable town that would benefit from regeneration and can accommodate future development and some growth provided facilities keep pace and environmental constraints respected. .*

**Halstead will remain as the major service centre for the north of the district, but will contain growth within its existing urban area.**

*Halstead is the smallest of the three main towns of the district. Located at the crossroads of the A131 and A1124, it offers a wide range of day to day services, a secondary school and 3 main local employment sites. It is also an attractive market town, but has potential for regeneration to enhance it further and upgrade local services and facilities.*

*Halstead is however constrained by its relatively isolated location, the surrounding attractive countryside and relative lack of public transport all of which limit its growth potential.*

*Development in the future will therefore be limited to within the existing town area although this will allow for over 1100 new dwellings, expansion of employment and services , town centre regeneration / enhancement on key sites and minor rounding off or infill on the edge of the town.*

.

#### **THE PREFERRED “SPATIAL POLICY STATEMENT” FOR THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

- ‘To preserve and enhance the character of the rural heartland of the Braintree District, its countryside and villages, by supporting development that is needed to make settlements and the rural economy more sustainable and protect and enhance the environment.
- To concentrate the majority of new development and services in the Main Towns of Braintree, Witham and Halstead, at new Growth Locations at Braintree and Witham and in the Key Service Villages’.

# **Planning for the future of Braintree District Spatial Strategy - The Location of Development**

## **SPATIAL STRATEGY**

The proposed overall Spatial Strategy for the district is based on the settlement hierarchy as set out in Part 1 and an analysis of the constraints and opportunities for development at the local settlement level.

It sets out:

- Proposals for the broad locations for growth, and explains how and why these locations have been selected.
- In broad terms the type and overall amount of development proposed for each location.

## **EVIDENCE BASE SUMMARY**

### **National policies**

- Planning Policy Statements generally promote the development of land within settlements in preference to “greenfield” or undeveloped land.

### **East of England Plan policies**

- Policy SS2 requires that major development should prioritise the use of previously developed land in and around urban areas whilst ensuring an adequate supply of land for development, especially for housing and employment.

### **The LSP Community Strategy Priorities**

The Community Strategy generally supports the principle of sustainable development which have been used to inform and guide the decisions on the hierarchy of settlements

### **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.

### **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.
- The Urban Capacity Study and the initial results of the SHLAA show that there is a sufficient supply of land for housing within the main towns and larger villages with over 3000 population, (up to 4000 sites in total) to cater for the required level of housing development for this district for the next ten years.
- More details are set out under the “housing “ “economy” and “environment” themes

### **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 DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS**

### **Braintree, Witham and Halstead –the main towns**

To accord with the Hierarchy of Places, the Spatial Strategy proposes that these three main towns should be the focus for development and growth as they provide all of the day to day services and many of the higher level services that residents of the district need. Braintree and Witham also have potential for improved transport services and links.

All three towns also have potential for increased jobs, housing, regeneration and to improve services and facilities.

### **The potential for “brownfield” or “urban capacity” growth.**

All the main towns offer considerable potential for a wide range of development in the shorter term within their existing boundaries.

Housing: The UCS shows clearly that there are enough suitable sites within the existing urban area of the main towns, with either with planning permission or already allocated for housing, to provide for at least 10 years supply of new housing at current (2007) building rates.

Employment: The ELR shows enough employment sites within the existing urban areas for about 10 years supply at current (2007) development rates.

Regeneration: All the towns have areas that would benefit from regeneration schemes to offer a wide range of uses and environmental improvements.

### **The potential Urban Extensions – “greenfield” development or “growth locations”**

Although the Urban Capacity for both housing and employment is healthy, there is a need to plan for longer term growth through the release of greenfield sites to ensure that the national policy requirement for an ongoing 5 years supply of housing is met in the long term.

**Braintree and Witham** present the best locations for greenfield development, because of their access to good transport links, existing high levels of services and relatively less sensitive local landscapes.

***Major greenfield development options should be located at Braintree and Witham.***

**Halstead** is less suitable for greenfield expansion, because of its much more sensitive landscape and less good transport links. There is still however ample land inside the urban area of the town for the required amount and type of development to take place so it can continue to grow and perform a valuable but more local service function.

***Major greenfield developments should not be located at Halstead, but there may be opportunities for small scale infill or rounding off development to be identified on the edge of the town.***

### **The key service villages**

These larger villages have at least all the services that are set out in the East of England Plan. They also have a population of at least 3000, so those services and facilities have a realistic chance of being retained and improved.

The UCS and ELR show significant opportunities for housing, employment, some regeneration, and other development to serve local needs within the existing village development areas.

However they have not got the critical mass nor the jobs and services to justify large scale greenfield development and are also mainly surrounded by sensitive landscape.

***Development should be limited to within the existing settlements only, Only very minor rounding off or infill should be considered on appropriate sites on the villages edges.***

### **The other villages and the countryside**

Many of the small villages in the district have seen some form of housing development over the past 20 years or so. However much of this has been for housing that is out of reach of many local people, so providing “affordable” housing has become a major concern.

Added to this, 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

National and regional policies severely restrict new development, especially housing, in the countryside. However development linked to agriculture and appropriate employment development to provide local jobs would be acceptable as, exceptionally, may be single dwellings to serve a particular proven local or functional need.

***In the defined small villages, development should be limited to affordable housing to serve local needs, minor infill and appropriate changes of use. Elsewhere it should be restricted to local employment, development linked to agriculture or other appropriate rural uses, and exceptionally, single dwellings needed to serve those uses.***

### **REJECTED ALTERNATIVE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS**

The Council has considered a number of alternative broad spatial options for the distribution of development across the district. The reasons for the rejection of these alternatives are set out below.

#### **THE BROWNFIELD-ONLY OPTION**

This option would focus all new development within the urban areas of the main towns and key service villages, with a small potential in some other villages.

### **ASSESSMENT OF THIS OPTION**

This option could meet the short to medium term need for housing as set out in the East of England Plan, relying solely on sites defined by the Urban Capacity Study and any others in the urban areas and existing village envelopes that may come forward. It would:

- Allow for town centre regeneration and possibly some development within existing employment sites.
- Allow for other improvements to local services such as schools and health provision, depending on the potential for developing on existing sites and the level of future needs.
- Protect the sensitive and attractive countryside of the district and the urban fringe of the main towns from pressure of development.
- Be the most “sustainable” option in many ways.

However it would not allow for:

- The total housing requirement in the East of England Plan , and the associated services and infrastructure that would be needed to serve that growth.
- Any significant new employment related development, especially in the form of a business park/innovation centre, as suggested in the economic reports.

It would not be sensible to leave such important decisions about where long term growth should be located until nearly the time it is needed. To do so would put pressure on the council to take such major decisions too quickly, may open the door for developments being allowed “piecemeal” at appeal, and would also prevent decisions being taken by the relevant organisations about the major services/facilities that will have to be planned for and delivered over a long period.

As regards housing, although there is sufficient brownfield housing land for about 5 years, it may be desirable to release greenfield sites earlier if it would bring forward a much higher rate of affordable housing delivery.

As regards employment, our evidence shows us that there may be a need to release some land for employment before then, although that will also depend on the state of the economy. The council may also wish to press on with the promotion and development of the business park/innovation centre which will assist in boosting our economy and reducing out-commuting.

***Given these medium to long term development needs and objectives, this option should not be considered as a possible Preferred Spatial Strategy option.***

## FOCUS ALL NEW GREENFIELD GROWTH AT EITHER BRAINTREE OR WITHAM INSTEAD OF BOTH.

### **ASSESSMENT OF THIS OPTION**

Although the amount of new development needed across the District is not large, focusing it all at one place could place undue strain on local services and other infrastructure.

Also both towns would benefit from injections of new development, including employment, town centre regeneration, and services that can serve the whole district to make it more sustainable.

## GREENFIELD DEVELOPMENT AT HALSTEAD OPTION

### **ASSESSMENT OF THIS OPTION**

***This option should be rejected as it has less infrastructure and poorer accessibility by public transport, so scores badly in the sustainability appraisal, and would be unattractive for major employment development***

## DISPERSAL OPTION

This option would involve allowing development to be spread over all settlements in the district in a relatively unconstrained way.

### **ASSESSMENT OF THIS OPTION**

Public consultation responses see some merit in this approach, and comments have been made about the need to ensure villages can continue to grow or that at least affordable local housing can be provided and services retained or even improved where possible. Both these objectives are laudable in themselves, especially where villages are remote from services and there is a clear need for affordable housing. However, allowing effectively uncontrolled growth in villages is contrary to national and regional strategies and to the outputs of the SA, which sees this approach as inherently unsustainable. It is possible to allow affordable housing to cater for local need and small scale developments to provide local services without the need for a “dispersal” strategy.

***This option should be rejected as it conflicts with both national and regional policies and is inherently unsustainable.***

## NEW SETTLEMENT OPTION

Although new settlements, in the form of “ECO TOWNS, are being promoted by the government, they are aimed at “growth points”, or large brownfield sites where there are clear opportunities / requirements for major growth or regeneration , and hence the creation of freestanding settlements of sufficient critical mass to be at least partly sustainable.

The government has now chosen its preferred locations for the new “Ecotowns”, but none of these are in Braintree District.

Two ECO TOWNS were submitted to government partly within the district at Boxted Wood (mostly in Uttlesford) and Marks Tey (partly in Colchester). The rejection of these locations by the government reinforces the view that these two proposals should not be progressed.

### **ASSESSMENT OF THIS OPTION**

The sustainability appraisal of the “new settlement” concept in the Issues and Options report, also concluded that it is likely that they 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. It is also of note that the district’s required growth targets are to be significantly reduced from their current level by the RSS, so the settlements are not needed to secure major growth.

Finally and importantly, the scale of growth required in the district is far less than that needed to justify a “new settlement” option in sustainability terms.

***This option should be rejected as it conflicts with both national and regional policies and is less sustainable than concentration at the main towns and key service villages.***

### **LINKING DEVELOPMENT TO INFRASTRUCTURE OPTION**

This would seek to link the location and types of development to their potential to improve or create solutions to current infrastructure deficiencies, especially in transportation.

### **ASSESSMENT OF THIS OPTION**

This would be a fragmented approach, based on current deficiencies, and not related to the current pattern of development. This would be contrary to national and regional policy. Linking development solely to transport facilities would also simply encourage travel both inside and outside the district, and would therefore be inherently unsustainable. There would be significant adverse impacts on the environment.

There are not considered to be sufficient other deficiencies in current infrastructure to justify this approach.

In addition the proposed new national Community Infrastructure Tariff will allow for all developments in the district to contribute towards the required infrastructure. This means that the links set out above will no longer be needed to justify the location of development simply to deliver new infrastructure.

***This option should be rejected, as it is not needed and would promote unsustainable development***

### **DEVELOPMENT AT BOTH THE MAIN TOWNS AND KEY SERVICE VILLAGES OPTION**

In addition to development at the main towns, options do exist to consider some greenfield development at the key service villages. There was some public support for this option at the last consultation stage.

These villages have been identified in the settlement hierarchy as having at least the basic service levels for sustainable settlements. Some already have potential for significant housing from urban capacity. Others have potential to secure more housing and other development in regeneration areas. However there may also be a case for allowing some greenfield housing, employment or other development where this is of a scale and type that would support local services in a positive way and be environmentally acceptable. This would be in place of some of the development at Braintree and Witham.

There are however difficulties in deciding how much this development should be overall, and how it may be distributed around the KSVs. It should also be noted that there are significant opportunities for “regeneration” on important sites in several key villages , which would be very likely to include market housing and employment.

The redevelopment of these sites is of primary importance, and it may be prejudiced if greenfield sites were available as well.

The case for allowing some additional market housing sites to deliver more affordable housing could also be made. However this could equally be achieved through the development of acceptable “exception” sites in the normal way .

Finally, although this approach would not conflict with the “dispersal” option, it is less sustainable than concentration at the main towns.

***This option should be rejected as it would be less sustainable than the preferred option, may prejudice regeneration and lead to pressure for more housing release in the countryside.***

## **THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DISTRICT**

This section sets out in detail the overall development and land requirements for housing and employment as set out in the East of England Plan, which will make up the bulk of the future development in the district over the plan period. The scale of these requirements has informed the decisions on the location of development and in particular the scale and location of potential growth locations at Braintree and Witham.

### **New housing**

The District Council has a key role to play with its partners, in ensuring that sufficient land is provided, in the right places, to enable housing to be provided to

achieve sustainable communities and to meet the needs for affordable and accessible housing.

### **The Scale of New Housing**

The East of England Plan sets out the following net additional dwelling requirement for Braintree District:

2006-2021 4,340 dws (average 290 per annum)

2021-2025 1,540 dws (average 385 per annum)

Total 2006- 2025 5,880 dws

Annual monitoring has provided the following figures on net completions to date:

Net dwelling completions 2006 to 2007 658 dws

Net dwelling completions 2007 to 2008 623 dws

The remaining net additional dwelling requirement from 2008 to 2025 is 4,599 dwellings. (average 270 per year)

The scale of housing development, proposed for this District, represents a decrease over the annual dwelling completions during the late 1990's and early years of this century. The problem of large-scale out-commuting was recognised in the preparation of the East of England Plan and it was felt that a further large housing allocation for Braintree District would add to this problem. The lower housing allocation was intended to provide the opportunity for additional employment development in the District to achieve a better balance between local housing and employment and therefore a more sustainable local community, which can meet the needs of the local population.

The East of England Plan provision is 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 for affordable housing in rural areas.

### **Existing Provision-Urban Capacity**

The Urban Capacity Study identified a potential housing supply on physically identifiable sites, within existing development boundaries, of 4,813 dwellings. The table below shows the distribution of dwellings identified in the study (It should be noted that this study did not include potential housing supply from the proposed regeneration sites at Sible Hedingham and Silver End Key Service Centres, which are now being considered and could include additional sites).



<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Urban Capacity Sites Provision (estimated no. of dwellings)</b>
Braintree	2166
Witham	1297
Halstead	543
Key Service Centres	807
Total	4813

The Council has commissioned a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, which is currently being undertaken, which will consider the viability of urban capacity and potential greenfield sites in market terms and potential constraints upon development. This should clarify whether the Urban Capacity Study potential supply is realistic.

Although the amount of potential housing sites, already identified within settlements, exceeds the dwelling requirement for this District, this does not take account of the need to provide a supply of housing land throughout the plan period, or the need to demonstrate a five year supply ( $270 \times 5 = 1350$  dws) of deliverable sites.

The 2007 Housing Trajectory, set out in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report, projects a total of 3,726 dwellings being built between 2005 to 2015 on sites already identified, within existing development boundaries. This could meet housing requirements up until that time without having to develop Urban Extension Growth Areas. However, this would leave only 1,087 potential urban capacity sites remain to meet the needs from 2015-2025, which could result in a shortfall of 1,613 dws between 2015 and 2025. ( $270 \text{ dws pa} \times 10$ , minus 1087 = 1613). This would give a requirement for additional capacity over and above the Urban Capacity Sites Potential of 1,613 dws.

The current housing slowdown is likely to result in the Urban Capacity sites not coming forward as quickly as projected in the 2007 Trajectory, which could delay the need for additional capacity to be brought forward. This need will be monitored each year, as part of the Annual Monitoring Report.

### **The Growth Locations – housing**

Given the requirements of the East of England Plan, and the urban capacity set out above, the Council proposes to allocate Urban Extension Growth Locations at Braintree and Witham to meet a provision of 1,400 dwellings.

The release of the Urban Extensions will be phased to ensure that brownfield sites are developed before the urban extensions and that the levels of land provision meet the East of England Plan requirements and those for a five year housing land supply.

## **New Employment Development**

The East of England Plan gives an indicative target for the local authorities of Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon and Uttlesford of 56,000 net job growth between 2001-2021.

It states that Local Development Documents should ensure that an adequate range of sites /premises is allocated to achieve this indicative target and the needs of the economy, as revealed by an up to date employment land review.

The District Council commissioned an Employment Land Review, which concluded that sites in current or recent employment use, should continue to be retained, unless the site or location is unsuitable for modern standards of development, or the consequence would be a bad neighbour to adjacent sites.

This recommended that provision should be made for an additional 3-5ha of employment land per year throughout the plan period, with an allocation of specific sites sufficient for 7 years development (ie 21-35 ha) at all times. It also concluded that consideration should be given to the designation of a new business park close to the A120, in the vicinity of Braintree, to provide for new demand generated by airport related and other expansion at Stansted.

A report commissioned by the Council by Cambridge Econometrics set out three different scenarios for the District's future, which concluded that the future number of jobs required in the District between 2005 - 2025 could range from 11,000 to 14,000.

The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England aims for sustainable economic growth and recognises the need for an increase in skills levels.

The District Council aims to ensure that there is sufficient land provided for employment to broaden the opportunities for business and secure the delivery of up to 14,000 jobs and to provide opportunities for local employment, which could reduce the level of out-commuting.

In 2007 there were 32.5 ha of vacant employment land in the District already allocated (in the Local Plan Review) for employment development. The table below shows the distribution of this land.

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Vacant / Allocated Employment Land Area (Ha)</b>
Braintree	3.0
Great Notley	7.8
Witham	14.5
Halstead	3.6
Sturmer	3.6
Total	32.5

The provision of sufficient employment land to cater for a take-up of a minimum of 3 ha of land, throughout the plan period, would require a total of 57 ha of employment land to be allocated, of which 32.5 ha has already been identified. The District Council intends to ensure that there is some flexibility in the provision of employment land, in case some sites are slow in coming forward, by providing 66 ha of employment land over the plan period.

The District Council will monitor the take up of sites and phase the delivery of new sites to meet the need for a seven year supply (21ha) to be available at all times.

### **The Growth Locations –employment**

The new allocations of 33.5 ha of employment land will be made up of a 12.5 ha Business Park (restricted to B1 and B2 uses) and 21 hectares of general employment uses. It is proposed that these should be located in the main settlements of Braintree and Witham, to be accessible by public transport and to try to achieve a more effective balance between the workforce and jobs.

An employment growth area is not proposed at Halstead because of its smaller population and community facilities, the high quality landscape constraining development around the town and the lack of good public transport links.

Possible alternatives to the amount and type of growth proposed
---

### **Growth Locations - Alternative Options - Housing**

The Council could:

- Seek to provide more dwellings, provided they were in sustainable locations, were in accordance with the East of England Plan and that the required infrastructure could be provided. Additional provision would require further assessments of the proposed locations.
- Seek to provide for a lower level of provision, based on the current slowdown in the housing market and not needing to develop Growth Locations until after 2016 - or until there is a need to release land to meet the Government's requirement for a five year supply.
- Consider alternative growth locations, or the redistribution of growth, in Braintree or Witham. However we feel that the suggested locations offer the best balance of accessibility both for transport and to local services, with a minimum impact on the local environment.

### **Growth Locations - Alternative Options - Employment**

The Council could:

- Seek to provide for a higher annual level of employment development. An additional 4 hectares per year would require 76 hectares of employment land over the plan period. This would have highway implications at Braintree and Witham and would require further highway assessments for the proposed new locations. There may also be issues with the delivery of more land in terms of market needs.
- Seek to provide for a lower annual level of employment development by, for example, reducing the provision to 57 hectares (a minimum of 3 hectares per year through the plan period). This could be achieved by either:
  - reducing the Braintree provision by 9 hectares, or
  - by removing the proposed additional provision of 6 hectares north of Witham at Rivenhall and reducing the Braintree provision by 3 hectares.
- Promote an alternative location for the new business park north of the A120 at Braintree. Delivery may be more difficult due to complex land ownerships and there would be substantial landscape impacts, especially when viewed from the A120.

It would also reduce the undeveloped gap of land between Braintree and Great Notley.

## **ASSESSMENTS OF THE GROWTH LOCATION DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS**

Although a number of locations have been put forward by landowners/developers during the LDF process to date, the Council has decided to assess the whole of the urban edges of Braintree and Witham against the criteria set out above, to determine their relative merits for development. In this way the “preferred” future growth locations can be defined.

The criteria for assessment of locations are set out below:

***Landscape capacity*** (as defined by the Landscape Character Assessment) This assesses the sensitivity of the local landscape and its ability to absorb change and/or development. This ranges from “low sensitivity” (could accommodate significant development) to “high sensitivity” (would be difficult to accommodate development)

***Transport*** (as defined by the Transportation Study). The ability of the transport system to accommodate growth and offer the best level of future public transport. It should be noted that this study is in draft at the time of writing this document.

***Flooding*** (as defined by the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment). This assesses the degree to which potential development locations would be affected by flooding.

***Access to services*** (as guided by the Sustainability Appraisal) –this assesses how locations would have access to existing services and facilities (e.g. schools, health) by walking and cycling, closeness to the town centre and employment areas.

***Impact on protected environments/features*** (as guided by the Appropriate Assessment and other existing designations). – This assesses how locations would impact on such issues as designated sites (European Sites, SSSIs etc), Protected Lanes, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Tree Preservation Orders and Ancient Monuments.

***Access to water and sewage systems*** (as guided by the water Cycle Study)- This assesses the availability of water and sewage systems to the location, and any potential new infrastructure improvements that may be required.

***Landfill Areas*** (as shown on the district council’s safeguarding maps) – This assesses the potential for conflict with known landfill sites which may make development unviable or impractical.

***Coalescence***- This assesses the potential for physically joining the main towns and neighbouring villages by the development in the location. Coalescence is generally considered to be undesirable as it takes away the local identity of villages both in terms of their character (they become part of the main town) and in the “perceptions” of their residents. Both these are important to maintaining “local distinctiveness” in the district. Coalescence can also have a significant impact on the rural environment around the towns and villages and can often lead to “suburbanisation” of large parts of the countryside around the towns.

## Presentation of analysis and options

In order to simplify the analysis and presentation of options at this stage, a “traffic light” system has been adopted for this document. This uses a simple **GREEN**, **AMBER**, **RED**, notation.

**GREEN** indicates locations which are considered potentially suitable for development on the basis of current knowledge. These are the Council’s Preferred Locations for development.

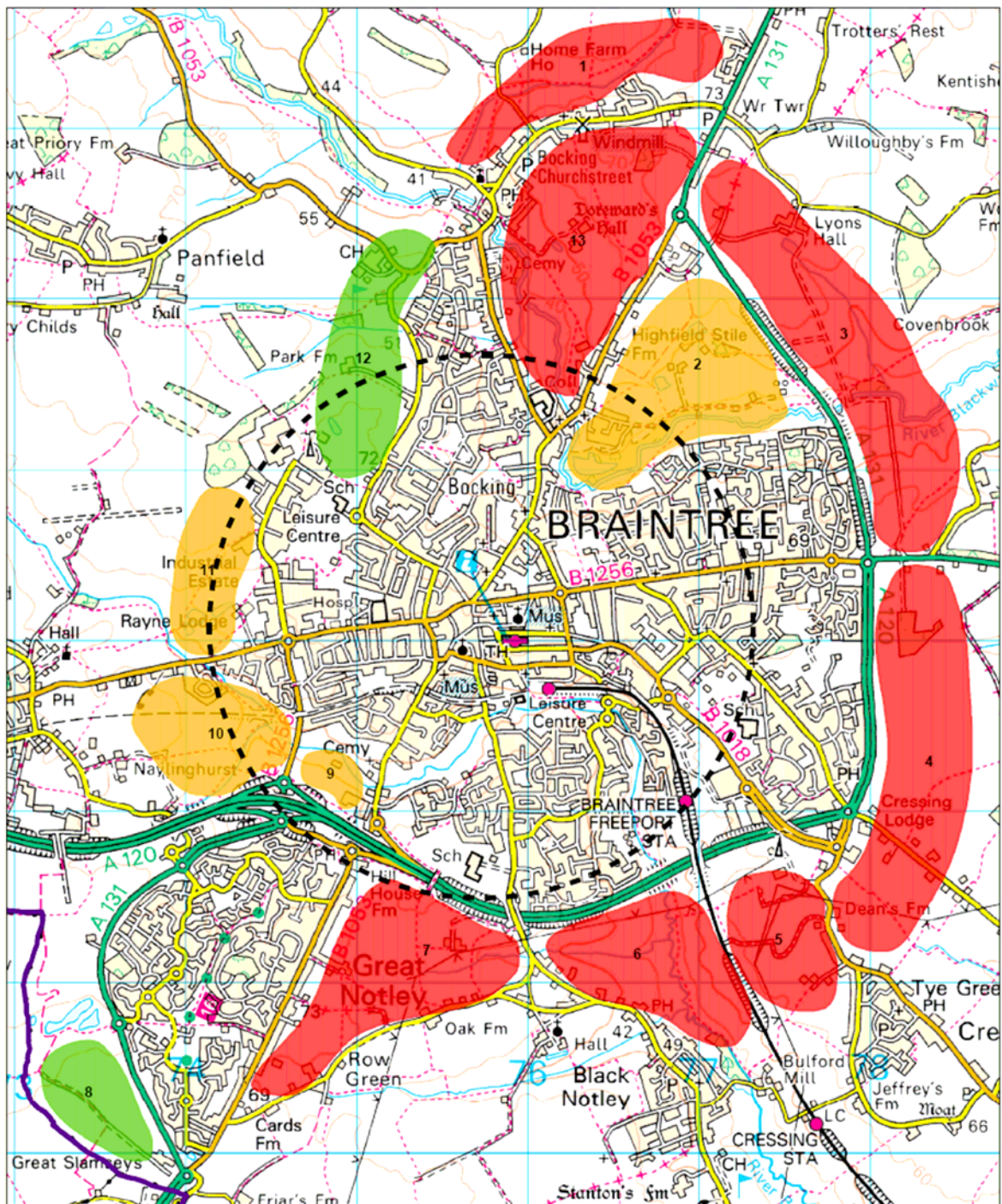
**AMBER** indicates locations that are considered less suitable for development and have significant constraints. These locations should only be investigated further if the Preferred Locations are ultimately shown to be unacceptable.

**RED** indicates locations that are considered unsuitable for development.

It should be noted that all locations have some issues that will need to be addressed so this exercise is one of “best fit” with the criteria.

The tables below show the locations analysed, their advantages and disadvantages and the overall conclusions as to their suitability for development in terms of the “traffic light” notation.

The maps of Braintree and Witham show the areas analysed. In accord with best practise in Core Strategies, these are diagrammatic and are intended to show only the broad location and extent of areas considered. The locations are not intended to show boundaries, access points, or any other site specific information.



### Assessment of Peripheral Growth Locations at Braintree

#### Key

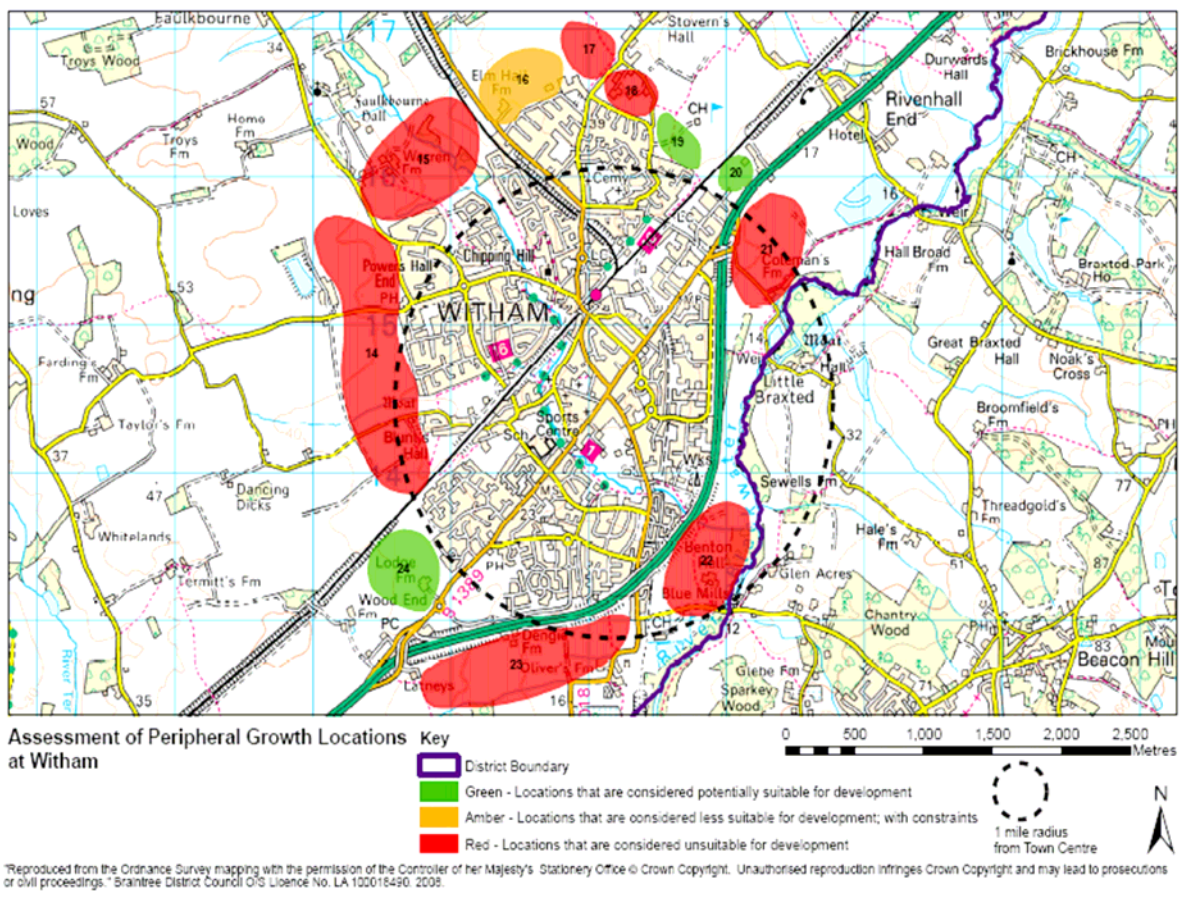
- District Boundary
- Green - Locations that are considered potentially suitable for development
- Amber - Locations that are considered less suitable for development; with constraints
- Red - Locations that are considered unsuitable for development

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 2,500 Metres



"Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecutions or civil proceedings." Braintree District Council O/S Licence No. LA 100018490. 2008.







## **Assessment of Peripheral Growth Locations**

<b>Site Reference</b>	<b>Uses Assessed</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Overall Suitability for Development</b>
<b>Braintree</b>				
1 – North of Bocking Church St	Housing and Community Uses Employment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>▪ Would damage the village character of Bocking Church Street.</li> <li>▪ Local roads sensitive to increased traffic</li> <li>▪ Flood issues on part of the site</li> <li>▪ Limited capacity at local schools</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment
2 – East of Broad Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Part of site within walking distance of the town centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low – Medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>▪ Separated from existing development by river</li> <li>▪ Further access junctions on the A131 would not be permitted.</li> <li>▪ Local roads sensitive to increased traffic.</li> <li>▪ Flood issues on parts of the site</li> <li>▪ Historic Landfill on part of Site</li> <li>▪ Limited access to schools</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for employment. Some potential for housing and community uses, but with significant constraints.
3 – East of A131	Housing and Community Uses Employment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low – Medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development.</li> <li>▪ A131 creates a barrier between development and the town.</li> <li>▪ Further access junctions on the A131 would not be permitted</li> <li>▪ Would exacerbate congestion at the Marks Farm junction</li> <li>▪ Flood issues on part of the site</li> <li>▪ Historic Landfill on part of site</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment.

4 – East of Braintree By Pass	Housing and Community Uses Employment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low – Medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>▪ Reduces the separation between Braintree and Cressing.</li> <li>▪ A120 creates a barrier between development and the town</li> <li>▪ Could prejudice possible route for improved A120</li> <li>▪ Further access junctions on the A120 would not be permitted</li> <li>▪ Would exacerbate congestion at the Galleys Corner junction</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment
5 – NW of Tye Green	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Walking distance of Freeport Railway Station</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low/Low-Medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development.</li> <li>▪ Reduces the separation between Braintree and Cressing</li> <li>▪ A120 creates barrier between development and town.</li> <li>▪ Could prejudice possible route for improved A120</li> <li>▪ Would exacerbate congestion at the Galleys Corner junction.</li> <li>▪ High Voltage Power Lines across site</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment
6 – N.E. of Black Notley	Housing and Community Uses Employment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low/Low – Medium capacity for landscape to accommodate growth.</li> <li>▪ Reduces the separation between Braintree and Black Notley</li> <li>▪ Further access junctions from the A120 would not be permitted.</li> <li>▪ Potential for new route of A120 to pass through site.</li> <li>▪ Local roads sensitive to</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>increased traffic</li> <li>Flood issues on part of the site</li> <li>High Voltage Power Lines across site</li> </ul>	
7 – East of London Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Footbridge link across A120 to secondary school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low – Medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>Local roads sensitive to increased traffic</li> <li>High Voltage Power Lines across site</li> <li>Drainage/sewage improvements would be required</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment
8 – S.W. of Gt. Notley	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity to existing employment</li> <li>Potential to increase the sustainability of the Great Notley development</li> <li>Close to the A120/A131 for employment development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>A131 and A120 creates a barrier between development and Braintree</li> <li>A131 creates a barrier between location and local facilities in Great Notley.</li> <li>Drainage/sewage improvements would be required.</li> <li>Limited school places.</li> </ul>	Potentially suitable for business park. Unsuitable for general employment due to proximity to Country Park. Unsuitable for housing. (Due to distance from town centre and separation from local facilities by A131.)
9 – East of Pods Brook Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close to the A120 for employment development.</li> <li>Proximity to existing employment</li> <li>Walking distance to town centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low - Medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>Reduces the separation between Braintree and Great Notley.</li> <li>Flood issues on part of the site</li> <li>Drainage/sewage improvements would be required</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for general employment uses, due to size of site and proximity to residential development. Some potential for housing and community uses, but with significant constraints.
10 – West of Pods Brook Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment including potentially relocated football club.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Part of site within walking distance of the town centre</li> <li>The Flitch Way is on the national cycle network.</li> <li>Close to the A120 for employment development.</li> <li>Proximity to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low – Medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>Reduces the separation between Braintree and Rayne</li> <li>Site is prominent from the A120</li> <li>Site is divided by the Flitch Way embankment.</li> </ul>	Some potential for employment and relocated football club, but with significant constraints. Unsuitable for housing (as reduces separation between Braintree and Rayne).

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>existing employment</li> <li>Potential location for business park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flood issues on part of the site</li> <li>Drainage/sewage improvements would be required</li> <li>Limited school capacity</li> </ul>	
11 – West of Springwood	Housing and Community Uses, Employment including potentially relocated football club.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity to existing employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low – Medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>Reduces separation between Rayne and Braintree.</li> <li>Potential for conflicts with adjacent general industrial area.</li> <li>Flood issues on part of the site</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for housing, due to proximity to employment. Some potential for employment/ football club, but with significant constraints (as reduces distance between Braintree and Rayne)
12 – West of Panfield Lane.	Housing and Community Uses, Employment including potentially relocated football club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extends existing employment area</li> <li>Adjacent to existing residential development and associated facilities</li> <li>Part of site within walking distance of the town centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low - Medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>Limited road capacity in places</li> <li>Potential for the creation of a rat run</li> <li>Possible loss of existing recreational land.</li> </ul>	Potentially suitable for housing, community uses, employment and relocated football club.
13 – East of Bocking Church St	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjacent to existing residential development and associated facilities</li> <li>Part of site within walking distance of town centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>Would prejudice the village character of Bocking Church Street</li> <li>Flood issues on part of the site</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment.
<b>Witham</b>				
14 – West of Humber Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is located adjacent to existing residential development and associated facilities.</li> <li>Part of site within walking distance of town centre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low – medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development.</li> <li>Local roads sensitive to increased traffic.</li> <li>Impact on two protected lanes</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment
15 – East of Faulkbourne Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is located adjacent to existing residential development and associated facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low – medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development. Flood issues on part of the site.</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact on the parkland setting of the Grade 1 listed Faulkbourne Hall.</li> </ul>	
16 – North of Conrad Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is located adjacent to existing residential development and associated facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low – medium capacity for landscape to accommodate growth.</li> <li>Likely to lead to an increase in traffic using the substandard Rivenhall End junction of the A12</li> <li>Access to town centre is via congested route.</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for general employment uses due to size of site and proximity to residential development. Some potential for housing, but not as close to station, employment, or town centre as site 19.
17 – North of Rickstones Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is located adjacent to existing residential development and associated facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low – medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>Reduces the separation between Witham and Rivenhall</li> <li>Likely to lead to an increase in traffic using the substandard Rivenhall End junction of the A12.</li> <li>Access to town centre is via congested route.</li> <li>A gas pipeline runs across the site.</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment
18 – North of Forest Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is located adjacent to existing residential development and associated facilities.</li> <li>Is within walking distance of the railway station</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low-medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> <li>Reduces separation between Witham and Rivenhall.</li> <li>Likely to lead to an increase in traffic using the substandard Rivenhall End junction of the A12.</li> <li>Access to town centre is via congested route.</li> <li>Part of the area is a nature conservation site</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment
19 – East of Forest Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is potential for an upgraded pedestrian/cyclist link across</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low – medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development</li> </ul>	Potentially suitable for housing and community uses. Unsuitable for

		<p>the railway line to nearby employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is located adjacent to existing residential development and associated facilities.</li> <li>▪ Is within walking distance of the railway station</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Likely to lead to an increase in traffic using the substandard Rivenhall End junction on the A12.</li> <li>▪ Access to town centre is via congested route.</li> </ul>	employment due to size of site and proximity to residential development.
20 – North of Eastways	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Close to the A12 and employment area, for employment use</li> <li>▪ Extension to existing employment site</li> <li>▪ Potential for an upgraded walking/cycle link across the railway line to nearby housing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low – medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development.</li> <li>▪ Would decrease the separation between Witham and Rivenhall End.</li> <li>▪ Development could exacerbate A12 Eastways Junction congestion.</li> <li>▪ Unsuitable for housing due to proximity to A12 and access through industrial area</li> <li>▪ A gas pipeline runs through the site</li> </ul>	Potentially suitable for employment. Unsuitable for housing due to proximity to A12, and employment site and access through employment site.
21 – Coleman's Farm	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Close to the A12 for employment use.</li> <li>▪ Proximity to existing employment land</li> <li>▪ Part of site within walking distance of town centre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low – medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development.</li> <li>▪ Reduces separation between Witham and Little Braxted</li> <li>▪ A12 creates barrier between development and town</li> <li>▪ Would require major improvement to Eastways junction.</li> <li>▪ Flood issues on part of the site.</li> <li>▪ There is a gas pipeline and archaeological site in the area.</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment
22 – North of Wickham Bishops Road	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Within walking distance of the town centre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Low – medium capacity for landscape to accommodate growth.</li> <li>▪ A12 creates barrier between development and</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>town.</li> <li>Further access junctions on the A12 would not be permitted</li> <li>Flood issues on part of the site.</li> <li>There is an archaeological area on the site.</li> </ul>	
23 – South of A12	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close to the A12 for employment use.</li> <li>Proximity to future employment site at Maltings Lane.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low – medium capacity for landscape to accommodate development.</li> <li>The A12 creates a barrier between development and the town</li> <li>There are capacity issues at the A12 junction and no slip road for traffic coming from the north.</li> <li>Further access junctions on the A12 would not be permitted.</li> <li>There is a gas pipeline running across the site.</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for both housing and employment
24 – Lodge Farm	Housing and Community Uses Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is located adjacent to existing residential development and associated facilities.</li> <li>Proximity to future employment site at Maltings Lane development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The landscape capacity is low/medium.</li> <li>There are capacity issues at the A12 junction and no slip road for traffic coming from the north.</li> <li>There is a gas pipeline running through the site.</li> </ul>	Unsuitable for employment due to A12 junction capacity. Potentially suitable for housing and community uses.

## **DISTRIBUTING GROWTH BETWEEN BRAINTREE AND WITHAM**

The analysis above clearly shows that there is potential for growth locations at both main towns. The scale of that potential is however, greater at Braintree than Witham.

**It is therefore proposed that growth is divided between Braintree and Witham because it offers:**

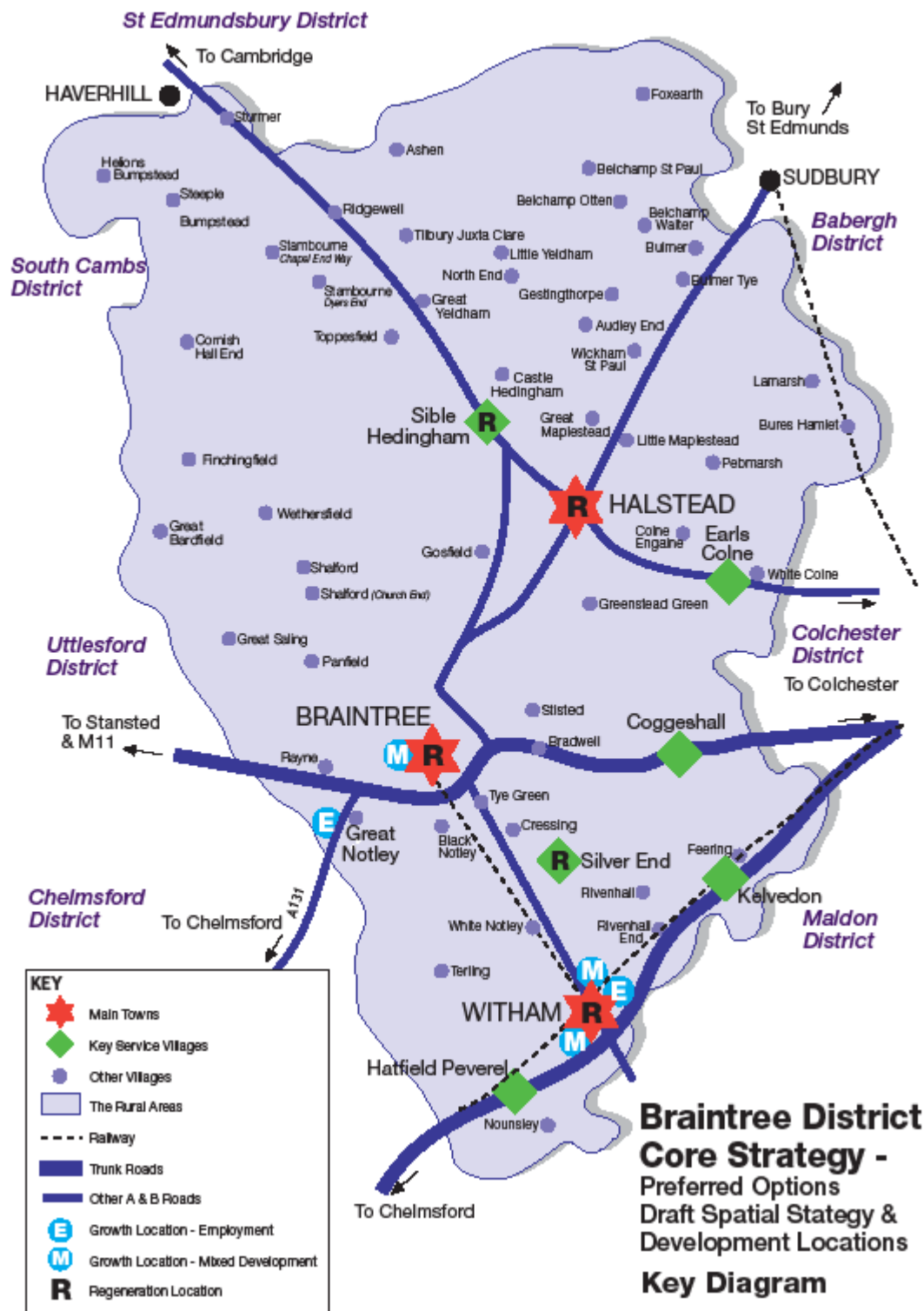
**Flexibility and Deliverability** – There are a range of potential locations for different types and scales of developments, which would be less constrained by deliverability factors. There are no major infrastructure costs that need to be met by one single development area.

**Least impact on the environment** – Locations can be chosen that would have the least landscape impact and flooding potential.

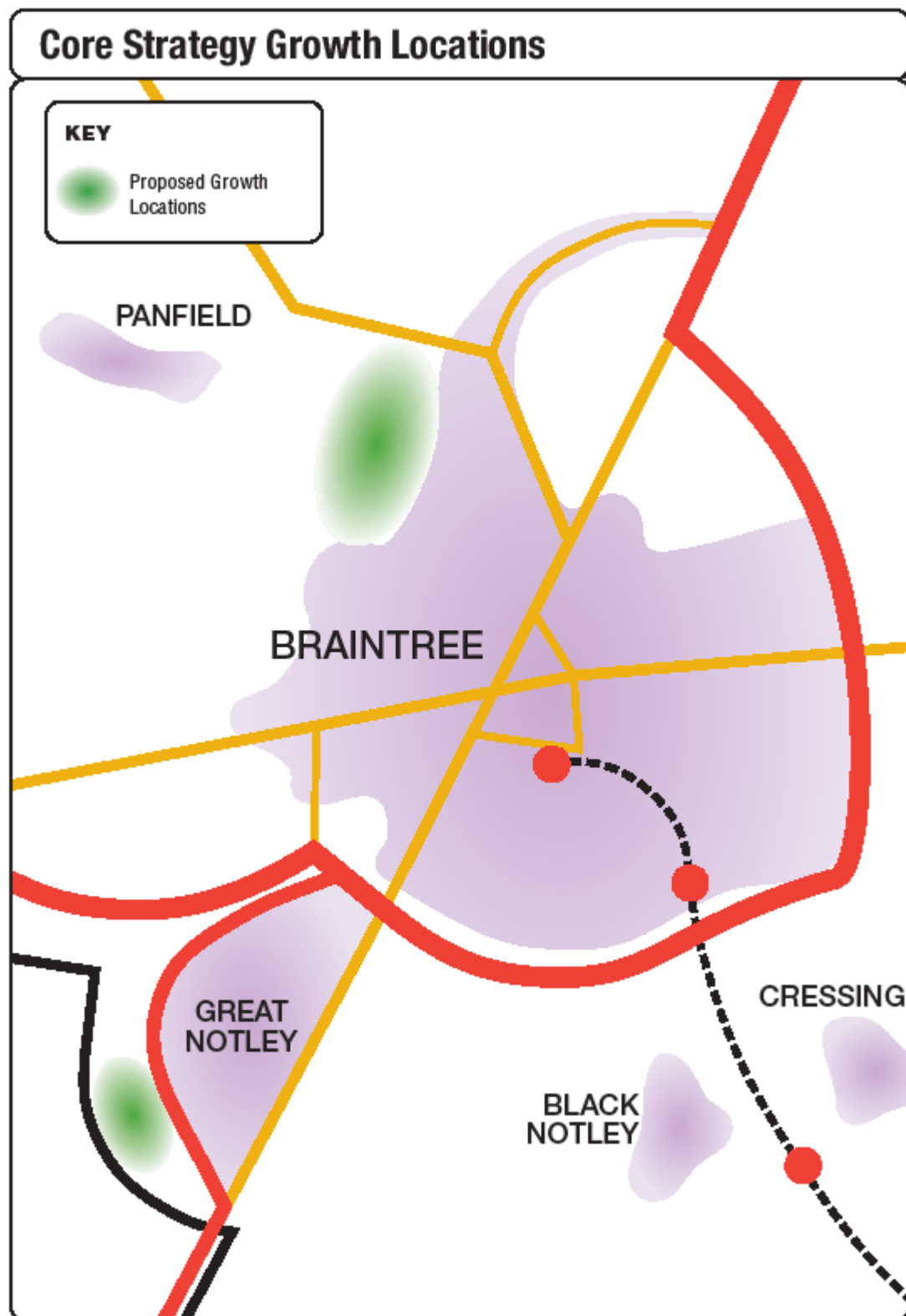
**The most positive sustainability appraisal**- Locations could be chosen that have the most sustainable locations and access to services and facilities.

<b>THE PROPOSED PREFERRED GROWTH LOCATIONS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Land to the north-west of Braintree – off Panfield Lane</b></li><li>• <b>Land to the west of the A131 at Great Notley</b></li><li>• <b>Land to the south-west of Witham - off Hatfield Road</b></li><li>• <b>Land to the north-east of Witham - off Forest Road in the parish of Rivenhall</b></li><li>• <b>Land to the north-east of Witham (adjacent to Eastways / Waterside Park) in the parish of Rivenhall</b></li></ul>

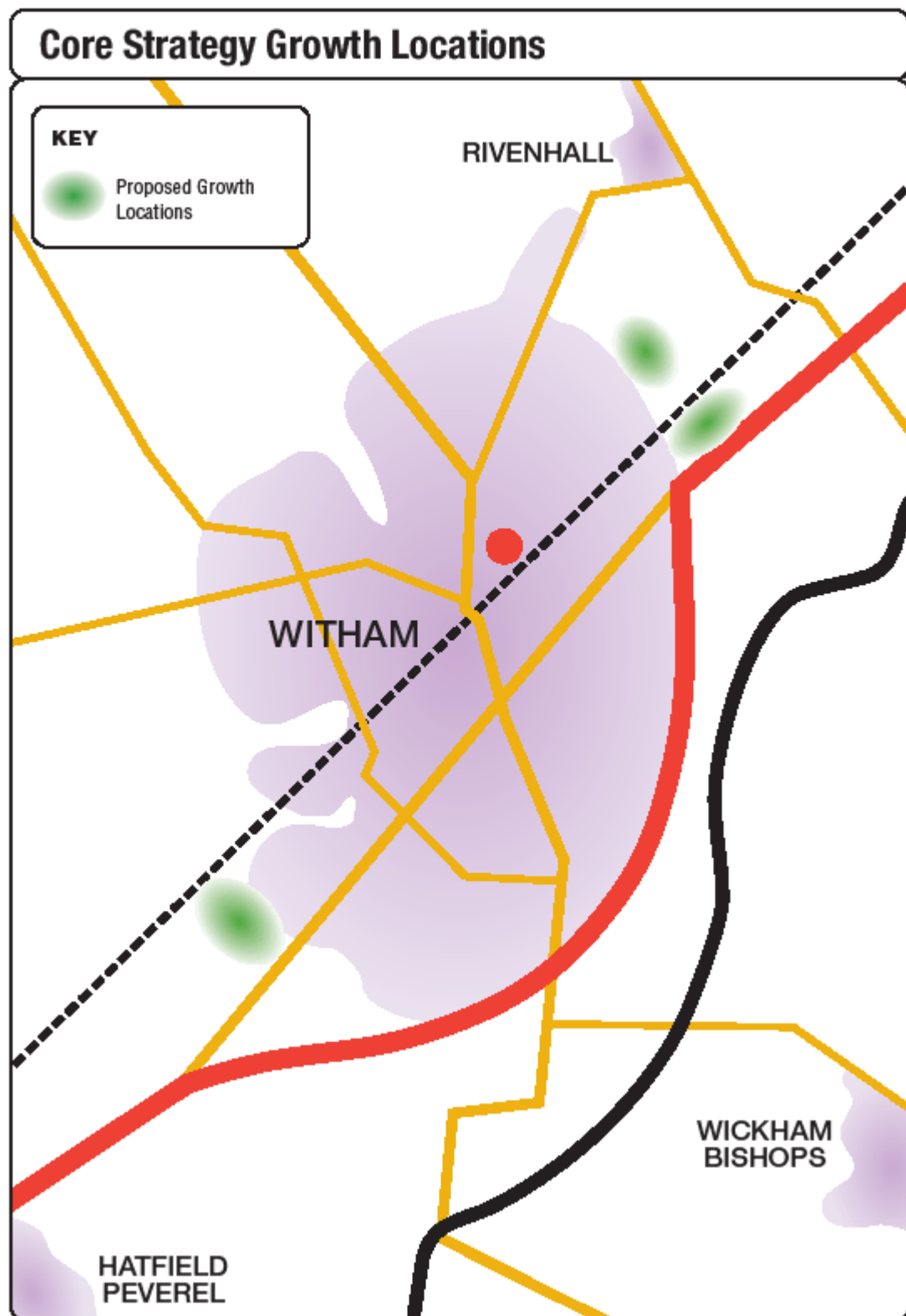




MAP 1



**MAP 2**



**MAP 3**

## PRIORITY THEME 1

### PROMOTING ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

This section looks at the future of transport and accessibility in the district and sets out the background to the proposed policies.

#### **Most relevant National Policies**

- PPS1, PPG13

#### **Most relevant East of England Plan Policies**

All transport policies are relevant to Braintree. In particular the following are most relevant:

- T1 Regional Strategy
- T6 Strategic and Regional Road Networks
- T7 Transport in Rural Areas

#### **The LSP Community Strategy Priorities**

- To ensure that key road and transport infrastructure and public transport improvements will have been made and that improvements will have been made to existing congestion hot-spot area

#### **BDC Corporate Strategy 2008-2012 Objectives**

- This policy supports Objectives 2 and 4

#### **The Issues and Options Report Feedback Summary**

- Support for improved public transport
- Support for improvements to A12/A120 and a new Halstead by pass
- Support for additional parking in town centres and stations.

#### **Most relevant Studies**

- Traffic impact study 2008

#### **Other Relevant Strategies**

- Essex Local Transport Plan 2006-2011
- Highways Agency

#### **Background to the proposed policies**

The ability to travel safely and easily at will has become a key feature of everyday life. The use of the car is now central to most people's lives and most developments built since the 1960s have been located and designed around it. The economy now relies on it, as do most forms of leisure and shopping. Car parking now takes up vast tracts of land and congestion in towns, villages and roads is growing.

At the same time we have become less inclined to walk or cycle even short distances and this has led to a reduction in health as people become less fit.

Braintree has very high car ownership with 82% owning at least one car, and the vast majority of trips to work are made by car or van ( 2007 AMR) . These factors are very significant for the district. There are however many people –in Braintree 18% - who still do not have access to a car and who rely of public transport or who prefer to walk, cycle or are disabled.

Long distance commuting ( by all modes) had also grown significantly, especially in those places which are close enough to a major city (such as London) to make it a practicable proposition. 43% of residents of the district work in other areas with 10% working as far away as London ( 2007 AMR) . Even international commuting is becoming more common with cheaper flights from airports such as Stansted and links to the continent via the channel tunnel.

In Braintree, as in many rural areas, bus services are generally declining, although most parts of the district have at least one service per day. However large tracts of the district, especially in the north and north east, have less than this or even no service at all (BDC Rural Services Survey 2008) . There are therefore many living in the villages who rely on public or community transport or family and friends to get about and access the services they need

National and regional planning and transport policies now accept that the transport balance has to be altered. The use of the car needs to be reduced if we are to promote and deliver sustainability, reverse, or even slow down commuting, tackle the impacts of climate change, reduce congestion and help make us healthier.

It will not be possible for the Council to achieve these objectives overnight or by itself, as the major transport networks and strategies are controlled by other agencies such as the Highways Agency, the Essex County Council, and Network Rail. The Core Strategy can however give a powerful lead by how and where it allows development and its policies on car access, public transport, walking and cycling. Working in partnership with those agencies plus local businesses and organisations who can influence employees and others in their travel patterns, will make a change in transport behaviour far more likely to be achieved.

It will still be necessary however to make many long journeys and carry freight by road, and so the main road network – in Braintree the A12 and A120 - should continue to be improved. Indeed this will be a key factor in securing the future growth of the districts economy. Similarly rail travel should be encouraged so that those who need or wish to still commute or travel long distances can have a realistic and efficient choice other than the car.

The Highways Agency has long term proposals to improve the safety and capacity of the A12 by local junction improvements which would benefit the district in the area around Witham, but comprehensive widening is not being proposed.

The Highways Agency proposals to upgrade the A120 towards Colchester, although listed in Appendix A Table 4 of the East of England Plan, are still to be confirmed and these are unlikely to be delivered until towards the end of the plan period at the earliest.

This Council however considers these improvements are essential in the long term and will continue to support them.

The Essex LT P also recognises the importance of upgrading the A12 and A120. It also supports local community transport initiatives in the rural areas.

The upgrading of the Witham/Braintree branch line has been a long standing aspiration for the County Council and this Council , and the current trends towards promoting public transport make this an even more desirable objective. However much work is needed to establish how this could be done, and where funding could be sought.

Away from strategic transport, there remains a need to make sure that local networks are maintained and where possible improved. Much can be done by making good high quality walking and cycling links between all parts of the towns, and most importantly the towns and the new growth locations when developed. Encouragement to walk or cycle to services and work will help cut traffic congestion, reduce pollution and promote healthy lifestyles. To this end the Council is working on upgrading various long distance foot paths and cycle ways .

Finally at the street level, it is important that appropriate design is used to make streets safe and usable by everyone, but especially by those such as the elderly, infirm and with small children, who may have the most need to use them. Good surfacing, lighting and high quality street furniture , maintained to a high standard, will all contribute to making streets easy, safe a pleasant to use.

## **Proposed Core Planning Policies in relation to Promoting Accessibility for All**

**(Proposed Core Planning Policy CS1)**

**Development, especially housing, employment, services and facilities will be:**

- **Focussed in accordance with the Spatial Policy Statement so it is fully accessible by a variety of modes of transport, in particular public transport, and to all abilities**
- **Located so as to reduce reliance on the private car to access local services and development which would or could significantly increase such use will be resisted.**
- **Designed to secure the minimisation of environmental impacts of travel, to conserve energy and reduce air pollution by limiting the growth in traffic and encourage alternatives to car use.**

**The following improvements to accessibility and the transport network will be promoted and/or secured.**

- **The maintenance and enhancement of the public transport network, and in particular access to and use of rail services serving the District.**
- **The promotion of community based alternatives to public transport, especially in the rural areas, by such initiatives as car pools, car sharing and voluntary mini bus services**
- **The greater use of sustainable transport and healthy lifestyles, including walking and cycling - by making those modes more integrated, accessible, safer and more attractive to use**
- **Necessary improvements to the national and regional road network where they would reduce safety problems, facilitate environmental enhancement, and support economic development.**
- **The provision of the minimum levels of car parking required to service the main towns and key service villages, and the promotion of walking and cycling within these centres**

### **Alternative Options which could be considered**

The proposed Core Planning Policy follows national and regional policy in promoting accessibility to secure sustainable development

The following could also be considered but would all be contrary to national and / or regional policies:

- Pursue a “business as usual” strategy in respect of the continued growth in car usage and such issues as parking policies. This would not contribute towards the overall sustainability objectives of this Strategy
- Make public transport, walking and cycling less of a priority. This would reduce the opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles and would give less support to our rural communities.
- Locate developments where they are less easy to access by public transport, walking etc. This would conflict with our proposed overall Spatial Policy Statement
- Not support improvements to the main trunk road and rail networks. This could also have an undesirable impact on the District’s economy.
- Include more detailed or specific wording to deal with issues in different parts of the District, or more detailed matters such as car parking standards and site layouts. More detailed policies, for example on the design of layouts and car parking standards, etc should be covered in later plans as should any issue of a purely local nature.

## **PRIORITY THEME 2**

### **CREATING A CLEAN AND GREEN ENVIRONMENT IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

This theme deals with the environment of our district. It sets out how national and regional policies will be met, and also how the Core Strategy will protect and improve the districts distinctive countryside, villages and towns.

#### **THE EVIDENCE BASE SUMMARY**

##### **National policies summary**

- PPS1 specifies the protection and enhancing of the environment as a key element of delivering sustainable development and fostering social inclusion.
- PPS7 seeks to protect the countryside for its own sake and give special protection to internationally and nationally important landscapes and habitats.
- PPS3 stresses the need to secure high standards in housing design to promote social inclusion and create high quality living environments.

##### **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 Community Priorities**

- To reduce the amount of waste being land-filled
- To ensure high standards of cleanliness
- To maintain the appearance of the District
- To protect and enhance its biodiversity
- To reduce our carbon footprints

### **BDC Corporate Strategy 2008-2012 Objectives**

These policies support objectives 1, 3 and 5

### **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.
  - There are effective ways of ensuring that developments fit into the landscape or minimise their impacts on it.
  - The CS should include policies to ensure that the landscapes are protected, and if possible enhanced

### **Other Relevant Strategies**

- Essex Biodiversity Action Plan
- Essex waste plan
- Conservation Area Appraisals
- Village Design Statements
- Parish Plans

### **Background to the proposed policies**

The protection of the environment is at the heart of securing sustainable development for the future. National and regional policies both emphasise this as a means of supporting biodiversity, creating the highest quality environments for people to live and making the best use of resources..

The protection and improvement of our countryside and historic environments have also been clear concerns from our consultations and this fits well with both national and regional policies.

### **The countryside and open spaces.**

#### **Landscape**

Braintree's extensive tracts of countryside are some of the most attractive and highest quality landscapes in the region, with many tranquil areas to experience and enjoy. Together with our numerous historic villages and listed buildings they can also be said to define both the district and the wider character of East Anglia.

However, it is this very attractiveness and tranquility which attracts many visitors and makes the district such a pleasant place to live. Unfortunately this causes tensions with the need to plan for new development which can be hard to resolve.

The LCA identifies 3 main types of landscape that make up the district :

*The farmland plateaux-* these extensive areas make up the bulk of the rural area and lie mainly in the north and south of the district. They are characterised by broad views and large fields giving an open yet rather isolated feel.

*The river valleys-* the valleys of the Brain, Pant ,Stour , Colne ,Pods Brook and Blackwater divide the higher farmland area and provide very attractive and more enclosed landscapes. Most of the towns and villages lie in or near these valleys, so they are under more pressure from development.

*The wooded farmland area.* –This lies across the centre of the district between Braintree and Halstead. Whilst it still retains the overall farmland character it has significantly more woodland cover and hedgerows, giving it a more enclosed, unspoilt feel.

Additionally three of the woodland areas are SSSIs and there are also tracts of ancient woodland and Historic Parks and Gardens (such as The Priory at Hatfield Peverel and Gosfield Hall) and 18 County wildlife sites.

The character of the Districts' countryside, especially in the north, is also defined by the many rural roads and lanes which form an attractive web of highways much beloved of visitors. Many of these are designated as Protected Lanes in the Adopted Local Plan.

These lanes are historic features with hedges and banks and many are of great age, giving an important continuity to the countryside.

All these extensive landscapes are identified as being of high quality in their own right but the critical areas lie in the river valleys around the main towns where there is most likely to be pressure for new development in the long term. However the LCA does suggest ways that such development may be accommodated successfully into the landscape.

National policy suggests that landscapes can be protected by criteria based policies and that local designations should only be used where those would not be sufficient. The LCA does not identify any areas in the district which might need such a local designation.

### Habitats

The countryside provides a broad range of habitats for wildlife and vegetation, some of which are of national importance (SSSI), and a number of local importance, including several areas of ancient woodlands located across the district.

The Blackwater estuary is outside the district, but is of European importance for nature conservation ( RAMSAR , SAC and SSSI designations) and at the same time very attractive for a range of leisure activities including sailing, walking and bird watching. . It is therefore sensitive to pressures from use by residents of the district. The Appropriate Assessment has suggested a number of ways that these pressures could be mitigated, linked to proposals for additional open space ( see below) .

### Open Spaces

The ability to access and use open spaces of all types is becoming more important, both as a means of improving the overall quality of life and also to encourage and promote activity, sports and healthy lifestyles. Open spaces also provides important “green lungs” in our towns which make them more attractive places to live.

Our attractive and tranquil countryside offers much in the way of a refuge from daily life, especially those areas such as the river valleys that are close to the main towns.

However much of it not accessible is remote from where most people live, or is unsuitable for many outdoor pursuits such as organised sports.

The Councils new Green Spaces Strategy identifies key needs for additional green space at Witham , Kelvedon, Coggeshall , Hatfield Peverel and in the Earls Colne and Yeldham areas. Opportunities are also set out for enhancing the local river valleys in the main towns and creating new footpaths and cycle ways.

Country parks also provide valuable open space in a more “natural” environment. The new country park at Great Notley is proving popular and there are further opportunities for similar developments in the south of the district in the long term.

The Appropriate Assessment has shown that action may be needed to try to offset the pressures on the Blackwater Estuary, by providing alternative attractors within the district. This could for example be achieved through the Council’s Green Spaces Strategy, new or expanded country parks, countryside management initiatives or by provision linked to the growth area developments. It will however be necessary to work with adjoining councils as many of the problems and potential solutions may involve joint initiatives and actions. More work is needed to decide the best approaches to this issue.

### Agricultural land

In the last 20 or 30 years there have been major changes in agricultural practices. Some of these have had significant impact on the countryside as farming had become more intensive, and older, less practical buildings have been replaced by more modern, functional designs or been altered to dwellings or other uses. Land has also been lost to other uses, especially leisure, but also some commercial development and Set Aside. It may become more important to protect agricultural land and buildings from other development in the future if home grown food again becomes important due to rising food prices, the need to reduce “freight miles”, and the growing moves towards organic farming.

## **Townscapes and Buildings**

### Designing and creating quality places to live

Although the council has always worked hard to make sure new development is of the highest quality, some has perhaps not delivered what was needed to make the best of the towns and historic villages of the district. Poor individual developments make for less attractive places to live , which in turn can contribute towards anti social behavior and crime as people feel they are less valued so need not be respected. Concern about rising crime is also clear from responses to our consultations. This lack of built quality, especially in many older housing estate

developments, should be put right. In addition the need to build extensively for the future demands that the highest standards of design and construction are secured.

The Council has adopted most of the Essex County Council Urban Place Supplement (UPS) that seeks to apply the latest thinking to developments in towns and suburbs, where most people will live and where the creation of quality environments is most important. The philosophy set out in the UPS will be important when setting out the design requirements in later planning documents for the proposed new growth areas at Braintree and Witham.

However, good design should not only be restricted to housing developments. All development, including the streets and open spaces of our towns and villages has impacts on the places we live and work. Commercial schemes, both general employment and retailing, can have a significant impact on the local environment often by the sheer scale and bulk of the buildings involved and the difficulty of designing the large single use blocks favoured by developers and end users for a specific function and often to a price.

The Council's aspiration to promote an Enterprise /Innovation Park to build on the local economy and improve local employment, and the redevelopment of the Regeneration Areas in the main towns and key service villages, will help in achieving the quality of buildings and spaces that will enhance our towns, villages and landscape.

#### Protecting and enhancing the districts heritage

Landscape alone does not make attractive places. Braintree is fortunate in having some of the most historic villages and small towns in the region, and it is how these have grown and changed in the landscape over hundreds of years that makes up the essential character of the district. Places such as Finchingfield, Coggeshall and Castle Hedingham regularly feature as the most visited and photographed villages in the region, but many more have equally special characters which contribute to the historic and modern day environment of our district. Silver End for example was built as "new village" in the 1920s to serve the then very modern Crittalls Window factory. Although the more recent parts of the factory have been demolished, the remaining core of the complex which still exists, gives it a unique sense of place in the district, akin to the other "factory villages" elsewhere in the country such as Bourneville and Saltaire. Braintree town itself also has the important industrial heritage of the Warners Silk Mill, which is now an important local museum.

The importance of our village heritage has been a central feature in the growing number of parish plans and village design statements that have been produced in recent years. They give a good indication of the value attached to the village environment by those communities.

The district also has many older, but not necessarily protected buildings, which are a valuable resource not only because they are often attractive and provide popular links with the past, but also for their potential usefulness in the future. Many older but potentially still useful buildings have been lost because they were thought "old fashioned" or incapable of re-use. These are now recognised as being mistaken views, not least because the buildings that replaced them were often of dubious merit.

As formal recognition of this heritage the district has 3000+ listed buildings, 39 conservation areas, a number of scheduled ancient monuments, historic parks and gardens as well as important archaeological remains.

However the continued preservation of this wealth of heritage relies on significant ongoing expenditure from owners of the buildings, especially in the historic villages and conservation areas , to maintain their appearance and fabric. This often results in requests for changes of use to commercial uses or other alterations, which can cause considerable tension between development and preservation. A balance must be struck between to prevent villages being solely the preserve of the commuter, or turned into historic “theme parks” with all the environmental and sustainability consequences.

The loss of these important links with our heritage would make the district all the poorer, and the mistakes of the past, when that heritage was often destroyed, should not be repeated.

## **Energy and Resources**

### **Saving energy**

The saving of energy in the design, construction and ongoing maintenance of buildings is rapidly becoming a crucial factor in sustainable development as recent continuing rises in fuel prices have graphically shown. Alternative forms of energy generation and construction techniques are being developed and they will need to be included in developments in the future.

At present there is some debate about the extent to which the planning system should intervene in these matters but we think that a lead needs to be taken in this Core Strategy to secure the move towards sustainable construction and energy reduction as soon as possible. However this may well have an impact on the design of buildings (e.g. the need for different forms, orientation and materials) and potentially the wider landscape ( e.g. the visual impact of wind farms) , so it may be necessary to change the way we think about the appearance of new developments and how they can be designed to “fit” into our towns, villages ,countryside and historic buildings .

### **Preserving water supplies and preventing flooding**

Water is becoming an increasingly scarce resource as the population and demand for water increases. Essex has amongst the lowest level of rainfall in the country.

There is no evidence that the amount of development being proposed for the district will lead to water shortages, but every effort should be made to save as much as possible. Developments should be designed in the future to achieve this.

Braintree District has previously experienced flooding in the valleys of the River Colne, Brain and Blackwater although this is usually very localised, and measures have been taken in recent years to minimise this risk at various locations including Halstead and Sible Hedingham . National policy demands that development, especially housing, should not be located where it would be in significant danger of flooding, but the amount of housing likely to be affected is very limited .Evidence from the SFRA and WCS shows that the required levels of development in the

district, both in the urban areas and proposed growth locations, can be accommodated without serious risk of flooding.

Techniques such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) will also help to minimise any risk, especially on the growth areas where they can be designed into schemes from the outset.

#### Dealing with Pollution and Waste

Two of the growing problems of modern living are the increased amount of pollution and the amount of waste we generate.

Many forms of pollution are covered by other specific legislation. Planning can however help to reduce pollution by, for example, locating development to reduce the unnecessary use of the car, and minimising the impacts of noise, smells and light (especially in the countryside).

Although the council is not responsible for waste disposal (Essex CC is the Waste Authority) it can help to reduce waste by for example encouraging the recycling of building materials and making sure that efficient waste disposal facilities are designed into all types of new development.

#### **Proposed Core Planning Policies in relation to the Natural Environment (Proposed Core Planning Policy CS2)**

**Our natural environment policy 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 on the Proposals Map**
- **Avoid the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land**
- **Minimise the impacts of development on sites of European importance and meet the local recreational needs of the community by identifying, protecting, enhancing and managing the natural and informal open spaces across the District**
- **Ensure that developments (including the use of land) do not have an unacceptable impact on the natural environment of the District and beyond from:**
  - **Air, noise, light and other types of pollution**
  - **Excessive use of water and other resources**
  - **The generation of waste**

## **Proposed Core Planning Policies in relation to the Built Environment (Proposed Core Planning Policy CS3)**

**Our built environment policy will be to promote and 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 sensitivity**
- **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,**
  - **recycled and/or energy efficient building materials and design,**
  - **waste recycling facilities**
- **Be capable of meeting the changing future of occupiers, especially in housing developments**
- **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 which can be considered**

The creation and protection of high quality and safe environments are required by national and regional policies, so there are considered to be no realistic options to the main thrust of these policies.

However additional options for inclusion can be considered. Some options are set out below:

- **An option for the wording to take account of regeneration initiatives in the main towns and villages**  
The possible wording for this could be for example 'Promote and secure the highest standards of new development, especially where they would regenerate and upgrade the existing character of towns and villages'.
- **An option to make the Core Planning Policies more or less prescriptive**  
National and regional policies cover many environmental matters and could be felt to be adequate. However the importance of our natural environment and local landscapes, built heritage and the District's desire to lead in sustainable development techniques, suggest that these matters should be given special local policy support and emphasis – possibly even being more prescriptive about the planning requirements.

This may particularly be the case in areas such as sustainable design and construction where market forces may not address them adequately.

### **PRIORITY THEME 3**

## **ACHIEVING A PROSPEROUS LOCAL ECONOMY IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

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. No job target figures are given.
- Sufficient sites should be identified to provide for the required range and types of employment sectors. The amount and types of sites are to be defined by the LPA
- Impacts on the environment should be minimised.

#### **The LSP Community Priorities**

- To increase opportunities for long-term inward business investment in the District
- To increase basic skills levels and vocational training opportunities in the District

#### **BDC Corporate Strategy 2008-2012 Objectives**

These policies support objective 2

#### **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



### **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

### **Other Relevant Strategies**

- EERA Economic Strategy

### **Strategic Spatial Objectives**

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

<b>1. Developing the economy</b>
----------------------------------

### **Background to the proposed policies**

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.

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, heritage and location to attract appropriate tourism development and jobs. New businesses are also often started as “working from home” and this is becoming an increasingly viable and appropriate option for a substantially rural district like Braintree, especially with advancing technology.

The East of England Plan gives an indicative target for the local authorities of Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford, Epping Forest, Harlow, Maldon and Uttlesford of 56,000 net job growth between 2001-2021.

It states that Local Development Documents should ensure that an adequate range of sites /premises is allocated to achieve this indicative target and the needs of the economy, as revealed by an up to date employment land review.

The District Council commissioned an Employment Land Review, which concluded that sites in current or recent employment use, should continue to be retained,

unless the site or location is unsuitable for modern standards of development, or the consequence would be a bad neighbour to adjacent sites.

This recommended that provision should be made for an additional 3-5ha of employment land per year throughout the plan period, with an allocation of specific sites sufficient for 7 years development (ie 21-35 ha) at all times. The study also 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 /innovation and enterprise park, adjacent to the A120, although the size and type of such development is subject to further study and refinement. Such a development would also marry well with the “knowledge based “ economy, projected by the two economic studies.

A report commissioned by the Council by Cambridge Econometrics set out three different scenarios for the District’s future, which concluded that the future number of jobs required in the District between 2005 - 2025 could range from 11,000 to 14,000.

The Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England aims for sustainable economic growth and recognises the need for an increase in skills levels.

The District Council aims to ensure that there is sufficient land provided for employment to broaden the opportunities for business and secure the delivery of up to 14,000 jobs and to provide opportunities for local employment, which could reduce the level of out-commuting.

In 2007 there were 32.5 ha of vacant employment land in the District already allocated (in the Local Plan Review) for employment development in the following locations:-

<b>Settlement</b>	<b>Vacant / Allocated Employment Land Area (Ha)</b>
Braintree	3.0
Great Notley	7.8
Witham	14.5
Halstead	3.6
Sturmer	3.6
Total	32.5

The provision of sufficient employment land to cater for a take-up of a minimum of 3 ha of land, throughout the plan period, would require a total of 57 ha of employment land to be allocated, of which 32.5 ha has already been identified. The District Council intends to ensure that there is some flexibility in the provision of employment land, in case some sites are slow in coming forward, by providing 66 ha of employment land over the plan period.

The District Council will monitor the take up of sites and phase the delivery of new sites to meet the need for a seven year supply (21ha) to be available at all times. The new allocations of 33.5 ha of employment land will be made up of a 12.5 ha Business Park (restricted to B1 and B2 uses) and 21 hectares of general employment uses. It is proposed that these should be located in the main

settlements of Braintree and Witham, to be accessible by public transport and to try to achieve a more effective balance between the workforce and jobs.

An employment growth area is not proposed at Halstead because of its smaller population and community facilities, the high quality landscape constraining development around the town and the lack of good public transport links.

A key element in promoting a more sustainable economy is to maximise the potential of the town centres and some key service villages for redevelopment and regeneration.

This would create local jobs, support the local community, and enhance several key but at present underused commercial sites. There would also be major environmental improvements to be gained from such initiatives.

It is anticipated that the review of the Council's own economic strategy will identify key challenges in terms of sustainable job growth, skills training, workforce development, and also confirm that some employment sites 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 along the lines suggested by the ELR and the two economic studies.

**The Proposed Core Planning Policy in relation to the Development of the Economy of the Braintree District  
(Proposed Core Planning Policy CS4)**

**The economy of the District will be developed and managed so as to :**

- **Broaden the opportunities for business and secure the delivery of employment land in the District by:**
  - seeking to redress the historic imbalance between housing and employment development,
  - maintaining high levels of local employment,
  - establishing a flexible and broadly skilled workforce and
  - taking measures to reduce out-commuting
- **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**
- **Promote sustainable economic development by encouraging appropriate home working.**
- **The diversification and strengthening of the rural economy will be promoted by supporting a range of appropriate employment opportunities subject to the criteria in Core Planning Policy CS2 – The Natural Environment**

**The Proposed Core Planning Policy in relation to the distribution of employment  
(Proposed Core Planning Policy CS5)**

The Council and its partners will provide for the development of a minimum of an additional 33.5 hectares of land for employment development, which will be phased to ensure a continuous seven year supply.

The distribution of land and type of additional allocations of employment land between 2007 and 2025 are proposed at the Growth Locations as follows:

<i><b>Growth Location</b></i>	<b>Type of Employment</b>	<b>Size (Hectares)</b>
<b>Braintree – land to the north-west off Panfield Lane</b>	<b>General employment</b>	<b>15.0</b>
<b>Braintree – land to the west of the A131 at Great Notley</b>	<b>Business Park B1-B2</b>	<b>12.5</b>
<b>Witham – land to the north-east off Forest Road</b>	<b>General employment</b>	<b>6.0</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>33.5</b>

These Growth Locations are identified on the Key Diagram.

### **Alternative Options which can be considered**

There are potentially three alternative policy approaches which may meet national and regional policies.

- 1 The Council could provide for a lower annual level of employment development by, for example, reducing the provision to 57 hectares (a minimum of 3 hectares per year through the plan period). This could impact on the proposed locations at Braintree at Witham. However this would not help in achieving a more effective balance of houses to jobs nor help reduce out-commuting. Also it would not help to deliver the main objective of the Core Planning Policy 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 it may be unrealistic for the plan for Braintree District to try to match the level of growth set out in the East of England Plan for Chelmsford and Colchester. It may also have unacceptable impacts on our environment and local transport networks.
- 3 Changes to the emphasis or detail of parts of the Core Planning Policy could be considered.
- 4 The location of new employment land is an integral part of the overall Spatial Policy for the District, including the Growth Locations, which is intended to deliver the most sustainable forms of development. Significantly different

locations would be contrary to this strategy and would lead to a miss-match of jobs and housing.

- 5 An alternative location for the new business park could however be north of the A120 in Braintree. This has the disadvantage of being in more than one land ownership, which might mean delivery is problematic. It would also reduce the strategic gap between Braintree and Great Notley.
- 6 The District Council could seek to provide for a higher annual level of employment development. Land requirements based upon an annual provision of 4 hectares would require 76 hectares of employment land over the plan period. However, discussions with Essex County Council and the Highways Agency on highway impact have identified constraints to higher levels of employment development at Braintree and Witham. Additional provision would require further highway assessments in the proposed new locations.
- 7 The District Council could seek to provide for a lower annual level of employment development by, for example, reducing the provision to 57 hectares (a minimum of 3 hectares per year through the plan period). The new provision could be reduced by either reducing the Braintree provision by 9 hectares, or by removing the proposed additional provision of 6 hectares north of Witham at Rivenhall and reducing the Braintree provision by 3 hectares.
- 8 An alternative location for the new Business Park could be north of the A120 in Braintree. This has the disadvantage of being in more than one land ownership, which might mean delivery is problematic. It would also reduce the strategic gap of land between Braintree and Great Notley.

### **3. The Rural Economy**

#### **Background to the proposed policies**

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.

This approach is also supported by the fact that the Council recognises the importance of the rural economy in its Rural Policy and Action Statement and offers positive support for small business and rural tourism.

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.

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.

There are also a small number of established employment sites on the edge of larger villages which are already recognised in the local plan and may be suitable for expansion subject to environmental criteria such as traffic, noise and their potential impact on the landscape.

The main attractions for tourists to the district are its historic villages and unspoilt countryside, so there is development pressure in those places to serve the tourist industry. Such villages as Finchingfield and Coggeshall are nationally, if not internationally renowned, and attract large numbers of visitors to savour their old buildings, historic character or special setting. There are also number of individual “attractions” that are located in the open countryside, due to their special character or history. Examples are the Colne Valley Railway at Sible Hedingham, the “Temple Barns” complex at Cressing, the Towerlands equestrian centre near Braintree and Gosfield Lake watersports centre.

However such developments impact on the local environment and this can sometimes be to the detriment of those very features that they are seeking to promote. Historic sites or villages suffer from traffic problems, as do the local roads, and large attractions can be inherently unsustainable if most visitors come by car. Again there is a need to balance the economic with the environmental factors to decide the best policy approach in the long term.

Finally there are also a number of existing small sites in the open 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.

**The Proposed Core Planning Policy in relation to the Rural Economy of the Braintree District  
(Proposed Core Planning Policy CS6)**

**The rural economy will be supported by encouraging and facilitating developments which:**

**Would give priority to:**

- **the appropriate re-use of suitable previously developed land or buildings where these are in appropriate locations for employment uses:**
- **Can be shown to help towards the promotion and viability of local farming enterprises, the diversification of agriculture and recreation uses appropriate to a countryside location**
- **Do not encourage unsustainable forms of travel, especially by large numbers of people, or would cause unacceptable impacts on the highway network**
- **Would respect and reinforce local character, and have acceptable impacts on the local and wider countryside environment.**

#### **Alternative Options which can be considered**

Two alternative options could potentially be considered.

1. It would be possible to propose either a more strict or a less strict policy but either approach would risk being contrary to national and regional policies in terms of the potential impacts on the countryside environment, and the difficulties of achieving sustainable development especially in travel terms.
2. Specific policies for the rural economy could have been included in the Core Planning Policy in relation to the Promotion and Development of the Economy of the Braintree District as set out above. However, the importance and extent of the rural areas in the District suggest that a separate Core Planning Policy should be the preferred approach.

#### **4. Town Centres and Regeneration**

##### **Background to the proposed policies**

The need to define greenfield employment sites in the longer term is recognised, but it is also vital to the Council's economic strategy and sustainability agenda 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:

- securing local jobs ,
- securing significant new private sector investment in the local economy
- enhancing the local environment
- promoting the overall sustainability of the district .

We set out below the key issues for the main centres and key service villages in promoting the regeneration of these areas

**The main town centres** are key shopping locations for the residents for the district and beyond, although they are not large enough in themselves to cater for the full range of shopping available in the large centres of Colchester and Chelmsford. However they all have their unique character which

**The retail study** highlights the desirability for each centre to be maintained and improved to secure its current shopping role into the future. However the study does not identify any need for major additional floorspace given the close proximity of Colchester and Chelmsford as major shopping and service centres, with which the district could not realistically compete. To do so would also conflict with the East of England plan. The Council is not therefore proposing any additional shopping floorspace , other than that which will be included in regeneration schemes.

Government is again stressing the importance of town centres, and the need to not only offer enough shopping, but also to maintain their unique local character and small independent shops and other services.

In common with all town centres, there are also on offer a range of other services and attractions such as banks, estate agents, bars, restaurants and clubs. These are also major employers in each town, especially in small businesses where staffing levels tend to remain relatively high. Indeed it may be that the main town centres of the district offer a more local choice of small retailers than many large towns, due to the relatively low rental levels, the local catchments and the lack of competition from major multiples.

All three main towns also have long established street markets. These offer another attractor to residents and visitors but also give the opportunity for very small local retailers to have a “position” in the town centres they could otherwise not afford. This variety adds considerably to the local distinctiveness and character of the town centres, is fully in accord with national policy, and should be preserved and enhanced.

The leisure functions of town centres have grown in recent years and many clubs and bars have now created an often very lively “night time economy”. However this can cause problems with anti social behaviour and this may put many people off using the town centres, especially in the evenings. A balance needs to be struck between the shopping /business function of the town centres and the “leisure” uses. Braintree and Witham are most affected in this regard. Care will be needed to make sure that any regeneration schemes do not add to these problems, or provide opportunities to offset them with other uses.

The districts main towns area not plagued by traffic congestion like many larger centres but they nevertheless suffer to some extent. However towns rely on good access , and measures to maintain that access yet keep traffic to a minimum are needed.

Regeneration schemes could assist by providing for improved public transport facilities or additional car parking if the suite is suitable.



All three main towns have their distinct characters, including conservation areas and a wealth of listed and other locally important buildings, and future development will need to respect this and enhance it in scale, design and the range of shopping and services it offers.

Braintree is the main shopping centre for the district and has been much enhanced in recent years with pedestrian areas, traffic calming /management and the George Yard development. It also has the linked Freeport factory outlet centre and Braintree Retail Park to the south of the town centre, which attract shoppers from well outside the district. However there are still opportunities for development and improvement which would make its position more secure and enhance the town centre environment.

Witham has a good range of shops and services for its size and a relatively new development in the Grove Centre. However the Newlands Centre is in need of complete refurbishment or redevelopment and this would help secure the future attractiveness of the town centre and maintain its important local shopping role.

Halstead also has a good range of shops, and because of its relative isolation, has retained a high proportion of small specialist local retailers. This, and its attractive High Street with a large number of listed buildings, gives it a unique character. However unlike Braintree and Witham, through traffic is a major problem and there are areas such as The Centre and land to the east of the High Street, which would benefit from redevelopment /refurbishment to enhance the towns attractiveness, promote its sustainability credentials in terms of shopping and services, and boost the local economy.

The key service villages essentially provide local shopping although some also offer specialist shopping that relies partly on tourists to flourish. Coggeshall also has the benefit of a market.

However there is considerable scope for improvements to the retail offer of all the key service villages, including the promotion of local food markets to boost locally grown produce, and small specialist comparison shopping, which may provide a local alternative to trips to the larger towns.

Local centres tend to be somewhat lower key than the main towns where leisure uses are concerned and this is not felt to be a particular issue.

They also suffer less for access problems, but it is perhaps more important that adequate parking is provided given the relative lack of public transport and the reliance that local businesses place on customers accessing by car from the more remote villages.

Regeneration sites in the key service villages will therefore tend to focus more on obsolete or vacant commercial sites which have been historically sited away from the village centres. However, they do provide the opportunity for improvements to the local services and facilities and the built environment, both of which would be an indirect benefit to the village centres.

### **Regeneration Area Locations –Proposed 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 were identified.

**The major town centre locations** 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 Centre area-Witham
- Land East of High Street- Halstead

**The village locations** 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 locations identified at present are at:

- Sible Hedingham, based around the Premdor factory site.
- Silver End, based around the Crittall factory site.

The delivery of these complex 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

### **Alternative Options that can be considered**

Our evidence suggests that the priorities set out above will best deliver the development we need to support the future economy of the District.

Alternative priorities may be to promote the development of the Innovation / Business Park ahead of town centre regeneration, or to promote the redevelopment of unsuitable employment sites ahead of other priorities.

However we think that that the overall advantages of securing the regeneration of key sites in the main towns and villages will have the most beneficial overall results. Also, the development of an Innovation / Business park will take some time to bring to fruition, so making that top priority might prejudice the regeneration initiatives by redirecting valuable and scarce resources.

Should proposals come forward for development in the allocated Employment areas, or for the redevelopment of Employment Redevelopment sites, they can be decided on their merits at the time without affecting the overall priorities set out.

There may also be as case for setting out more detailed policies for these priorities in the Strategy rather than leaving them to the later plans. However we think that this would only add bulk to the document and such details are better dealt with in either the Site Allocations or Development Control Documents to be produced later.

## **5 Other Employment Priorities**

### **Background to the proposed policies**

Having established the town and village centre regenerations as the highest priority for the economic strategy, there is a need to set out the priorities for delivering employment development across the remainder of the district in line with the overall, strategy and proposed locations set out in policies CS????

#### **Priority 1 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

#### **Priority 2 Employment Redevelopment areas.**

There are a small number of sites that the ELR 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.

#### **Priority 3 The designation of new Employment Allocations**

Our economic studies and the ELR 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 suggested location for these allocations are shown on the Spatial Strategy MAP1 and in more detail on MAPS 2 and 3

The ELR 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.

#### **Priority 4 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 ELR recognise 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 location 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 12.5ha. 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 broad location would be critical to ensure that there would be not major obstacles such as traffic generation and environmental impacts in securing such expansion in the future.

A range of commercial uses could be accommodated on such a development, it is considered 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 grow 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. It would also present the best opportunity to ensure that the development meets the highest environmental and design standards.

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. Designing such a development to meet the required standards may also be difficult.

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.

#### Priority 5 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, they can also make a positive contribution to local employment and the local economy.

Any employment within the housing areas themselves, will probably need to 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 should 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.

**The Proposed Core Planning Policy in relation to Town Centres and Regeneration  
(Proposed Core Planning Policy CS7)**

**Economic Development will be promoted and secured in accordance with the following broad priorities.**

- 1. The regeneration of key sites in the Main Town and Key Service Villages**
- 1. The safeguarding of existing employment sites**
- 2. The allocation and promotion of employment redevelopment areas**
- 3. The designation and development of new employment locations**
- 4. The allocation, promotion and development of a new innovation and enterprise park**
- 5. The promotion of mixed use developments**

**These priorities will be promoted and developed in accordance with the principles set out in this Strategy, and further detailed proposals and policies are set out in the Site Allocations and Development Policies Documents.**

**Supplementary Planning Documents may also be produced to set out the requirements for some sites in more detail.**

**Alternative Options that can be considered**

The more detailed policies above follow logically from the overall spatial strategy and the economic strategy .They are also supported by the evidence base.

It is considered that there are no fundamental policy options to those set out.

## **PRIORITY THEME 4**

### **ENABLING EVERYONE IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT TO ENJOY A SAFE AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE**

This part of the document sets out the proposed policies in relation to the theme of 'enabling everyone in the Braintree District to enjoy a safe and healthy lifestyle'.

This theme deals with making sure that everyone in the District has the best possible access to the services they need. It covers the following five issues:

- Housing
- Health
- Education
- Leisure
- Community Safety

### **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 Community Priorities**

- The Mid Essex PCTs Public Health Report 2008 suggest 5 initiatives to support health improvements in the district.

### **BDC Corporate Strategy 2008-2012 Objectives**

These policies support the following Corporate Strategies:

- 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
- 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

Adopted by the Council in March 2008 –Key outcomes

- Braintree District's house prices are above the regional and national levels, but slightly below the more local ones. The level of recent growth is also more modest.
- detached homes dominate the more rural parts with terraced housing found mainly in urban areas.
- There is relative stability of owner occupied and social rented housing, and dynamism in the private rented sector,
- Most numerous problems were related to special needs and affordability:
- All sizes and tenures of housing are required. About 59% of the requirement is market housing so 40% is for affordable housing
- The Council will have to have regard to deliverability in setting its overall target for affordable housing. Based on this study, about a third of the affordable housing could be intermediate.
- Whatever level of newbuild seems wise in the context of the constraints should easily be possible, as the demand exceeds recent performance and far exceeds the proposed minimum target number.

#### Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

This research is still underway at the time of drafting this document

#### Housing Trajectory 2007

There were 658 net additional dwellings built in Braintree District between 2006 / 2007 and 628 in 2007 / 2008. To date ( October ) ???have been completed in 2008/2009

#### Rural Services Survey 2008 –key outputs

- 7 villages have all principle day to day services
- 35% of villages identified their centre for key services as being outside the district .
- The Halstead area is relatively poorly served compared to the rest of the district.
- An average of 48% of villages across the whole district have a primary school
- An average of 23% of villages across the whole district have a doctors surgery



- An average of 74% of villages across the whole district have a pub
- An average of 66% have a play area and/or sports pitch

#### **Other relevant strategies**

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

#### **Strategic Spatial Objectives**

These policies support Objectives 1, 3 ,4, 5 , 7 , 9,and 12

### **SAFE AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES**

#### **Background to the proposed policies**

Creating and delivering sustainable communities is at the heart of the Governments approach to planning. It also forms the bedrock of the East of England Plan and is a key component of the LSP SCS. 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.

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 background to these issues, and the policies that are being proposed to deliver the housing and community services which will be needed in the future.

### **DELIVERING HOUSING**

#### **How much housing is needed?**

As set out earlier in the document, 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.

#### **Where and when will the housing be built ?**

As set out in the Spatial Strategy, it is intended to locate the major part of the new housing growth in:

- The main towns (urban capacity)
- The key service villages (urban capacity)
- The urban extension Growth Locations at Braintree and Witham

### **What types of housing are needed?**

The SHMA clearly show that there is mainly a need for family accommodation in all sectors (2 bed upwards) in the district.

### **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 appreciably, there is every indication that relative strength will continue and new houses built over the 15 year life of the Core Strategy.

### **Affordable Housing**

#### **Need**

Because house prices in Braintree District are relatively high, many people cannot afford to buy, or even enter shared equity schemes, 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.

#### **Targets**

The East of England Plan also sets out a target 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.

#### **Delivery –the amount of affordable housing**

### **Direct provision**

The conclusions of the SHMA confirm the need for as much as 40% affordable housing in this District. Many of the sites that have been developed and are currently in the pipeline are below the current 15 unit limit in both the towns and villages. This has resulted in a growing under-provision of affordable housing against what should have been achieved given the total numbers of houses built.

In 2006/2007 some 28% of affordable homes were developed. This compares with a target of 30% in the Local Plan. However that year was exceptionally high, and monitoring shows that is a growing tendency for applications to be submitted below the 15 unit threshold to avoid having to provide affordable housing.

The continued use of the 15 unit threshold cannot therefore be justified, and should be significantly lowered, in particular for the many smaller sites that make up most of the sites in the main towns and larger villages. However care must be taken not to make the threshold for full provision, either on or off-site, so low as

to discourage market development, especially in the current climate, as this could simply stop many sites being developed at all.

PPS3 also says the target for the amount of affordable housing should be linked to an assessment of the economic viability of land for housing. A study is therefore to be commissioned of the economic viability of development across the district to set an overall target and to recommend a viable threshold for sites to trigger a requirement for affordable housing. However it is not being proposed that this level of detail be included in the Core Strategy.

It is possible that the threshold and level of provision may vary across the district and between urban and rural, greenfield and brownfield sites. In addition, we will be using the economic assessment 'toolkit' to enable us to assess viability on a site-by-site basis as land is brought forward for development. This "toolkit" will eventually form the basis for negotiations on affordable housing in section 106 agreements.

A number of options are set out below for consultation at this stage for comment that represent different balances of thresholds that may be applied. These are:

- A threshold of 3 dwellings or .1ha with a percentage of 35% affordable
- A threshold of 5 dwellings or .2ha with a percentage of 40% affordable
- A threshold of 10 dwellings or .3ha with a percentage of 45% affordable

The Growth Locations, which will be needed to supply housing later in the plan period, can be planned from the outset to deliver a higher proportion of affordable housing. They should therefore have more stringent thresholds that can be clearly seen and budgeted for by landowners and developers at the outset.

In view of the requirements in PPS 3 to take viability into account when setting policy, it will be necessary for the Council to undertake a viability assessment in order to ensure that there is a robust basis for setting affordable housing requirement for sites.

### **A tariff contribution from very small sites**

All these options relate to sites above 3 units as this is the lowest threshold where providing an affordable house on site could be realistic, practical, and viable. However there are many sites that are below that size and it would be equitable for all housing developments to contribute to affordable housing in some way.

The use of a tariff to secure funding from all sites would help in delivering the maximum amount of affordable housing across the District. This may be a potentially useful approach in the villages where small sites make up the majority of developments. The concept of a "tariff" to secure other necessary infrastructure has been formalised by the government in the CIL, so it is being proposed as a valid mechanism for the delivery of affordable housing from all sites regardless of size and location.

The detail of such a tariff would require to be worked out, but it could take the form of a “one –off” payment per unit, or a sliding scale depending on the number of units being developed.

#### Delivery - The location of affordable housing

Where affordable housing is located is also important. Ideally it should be on the same site as the market housing but this may not always be easy to achieve. However whilst alternative sites can be considered acceptable, it is important that all practical alternatives are fully explored before off-site provision is made. This “stepped” approach could include:

- The developer bidding for the required funding
- Alternative tenure splits
- Alternative mixes of units

The “tariff approach” for very small sites will also add to the options for the location of affordable housing.

### **Special needs Housing**

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.

#### 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, especially from staff (in nursing homes or sheltered accommodation) visitors and health services, and would not benefit from living in isolated locations. Such isolation can also lead to social exclusion which is contrary to national policies. This means that they should be living in the same places as all other sectors of the community if their special needs are to be met in a sustainable, inclusive and cost effective way.

The disabled and elderly also have particular practical needs and many older houses cannot accommodate wheelchairs, lifts etc. Although in recent years the internal layout and space standards of houses has not been a planning matter, the growing concerns about the quality of new housing has led to this issue re-emerging as a legitimate issue in the design of new housing. This issue is particularly relevant to social housing where many more people are restricted in their choice of accommodation and their ability to move in response to their changing needs than on the open market. Social housing should therefore be designed to be more flexible and offer better space standards than the equivalent market housing, especially in smaller houses and flats, where there is much less scope to cater for peoples changing circumstances.

The Lifetime Homes Standard (which is due to become mandatory for all public housing by 2011 and a national standard for all housing by 2013) sets out quite specific design and space standards that would assist many older/disabled people. Although it is sometimes difficult to meet all elements if the standards because of site constraints etc the council feels it should be supporting the aims to bring forward the standard as soon as possible across in all housing. This will be easier to achieve in the new growth areas.

### **Creating high quality places to live**

The Lifetime Homes standards will help to create practical places for people to live. Although this in itself helps to create feelings of well-being for residents, the creation of high quality places depends on much more than practicalities. 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, such as in the larger villages. The Essex Design Guide and Urban Place supplement, both of which have largely been adopted by the council, offer an excellent way of achieving this approach. However there may well be places where other design approaches can be as effective and just as acceptable. Innovative design can add much to a place, provided it is carried out with the highest possible quality materials , respects and responds to the locality, and has an eye to practical, day to day living,

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, and in fact many of our older town areas and villages are built to very high

densities. However building to meet today's needs means that more care is needed to get it right. For example thought is needed as to how developments will work in day to day practical terms, and how they can be designed to minimise conflicts between residents and the opportunities for crime.

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 ( both formal and informal) , footpaths and cycle ways which will give good access to public transport and local shops, all have a key role to play.

It will also be important to consider how opportunities for local employment are designed into developments, so that they are convenient but cause the least impact to residents. The growth locations, and the larger urban sites, will give the opportunities for creative and innovative approaches.

<b>The Proposed Core Planning Policy in relation to Housing Provision and Delivery (Proposed Core Planning Policy CS8)</b>
<p><b>Provision will be made for dwellings between 2006 and 2025 in accordance with Policy H1 of the East of England Plan</b></p> <p><b>These dwellings will be located in accordance with the Spatial Policy for the District:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• in the urban areas of Braintree, Witham and Halstead</li><li>• in the Key Service Villages</li><li>• in new mixed-use Growth Locations to be developed when required at Braintree and Witham</li><li>• In small scale developments in other defined settlements to cater for local needs affordable housing or as appropriate infilling</li><li>• As part of mixed use developments in the identified regeneration areas</li></ul> <p>All sites, apart from Exception Sites for affordable housing will be defined on the Site Allocations DPD Proposals map</p> <p><b>In all these areas, provision will be made for a range of different dwelling types and sizes to meet the identified housing need for all sectors of the community</b></p> <p><b>Affordable housing will be directly provided by the developer within housing schemes on the following basis:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A threshold of 5 dwellings or 0.2 hectares with a percentage of 40% affordable. Where this requirement is shown not to be feasible, developers must examine fully all alternative ways to deliver the same amount of affordable housing on the site</li></ul>

- Exceptionally, off-site provision may be acceptable if on-site provision is shown to be unviable or otherwise impractical
- On sites below 5 dwellings a tariff will be charged to contribute towards the delivery of affordable housing across the District.

Provision will be made for sites in suitable locations to cater for:

- gypsies and travellers and
  - travelling show people
- which meet the currently defined local need of the District.

New housing will be designed so that:

- Densities will be appropriate to the character of the location / settlements concerned. Higher densities will be appropriate in the main town centres and those Key Service Villages where it would reflect and complement the character of that settlement
- High quality, practical and sustainable living environments will be created
- In the Growth Locations, local employment opportunities, open space and day to day services can be provided or secured nearby
- High-quality non-car access links are provided to the main local services and employment areas
- Affordable housing will be an integral part of the overall development and all dwellings can meet the changing needs of occupiers

## **Alternative Policy Approaches**

### ***The location of new housing***

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

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

### ***Affordable housing***

The criteria set out in the policy have been chosen to deliver the maximum amount of affordable housing during the plan period, given the characteristics of many sites and viability issues. However there are alternative balances that could be struck between capacity and % contribution that may make such provision more viable for developers in the shorter term. In the longer term however we feel that adjustments can be made to costs to take account of the new criteria.

### ***Making high quality places to live***

The creation of high quality places to live is a requirement of national and regional policy. Making the highest quality places to live should be a key part of our strategy. We think that there is no realistic alternative to this approach.

The requirement to make affordable housing meet higher space standards could be removed, but this would be contrary to the evidence that this is an issue for many residents.

## **PART**

### **SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

A wide range of services and facilities are needed 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.

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.

**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.

#### Current issues for the main services in Braintree district.

**Education :** There is a need to plan for a slowing population growth in the district for the medium to longer term, which is reflected in the lower housing requirement in the East of England plan. This should mean less long-term pressure for new or expanded schools. However there is a need to plan for “lifelong learning” and this should also be reflected in the provision and location of services. This could include plans for Notley High to open a 6<sup>th</sup> form centre in 2009.

**Health:** The Mid Essex PCT is shortly to open an important new Community Hospital at Braintree. This will improve local primary health care for a significant area of the district. Initiatives are also underway to improve the local health facilities at Witham. The PCT is also seeking opportunities to rationalise and improve local health care facilities in the villages, especially where this could be

linked to the redevelopment of the Regeneration Areas or other local sites. It also fully supports initiatives for encouraging healthy living, such as walking and cycling, the creation of attractive, safe environments, and delivering specialist services for the elderly and other groups with particular needs.

**Community Safety /Police.** Braintree enjoys a relatively low crime rate (37 per 1000 people), which is much lower than both the Essex and national averages. However this is not reflected in the public perception of crime, which continues to rise. It is important that older areas are improved wherever possible and new ones designed to reduce the levels of crime, and importantly, the public's fear of crime. Low crime rates also have a benefit to the local economy, especially in the town centres which rely on attracting people to shop and in the evenings.

#### **The Proposed Core Planning Policy in relation to Services and Facilities (Proposed Core Planning Policy CS9)**

**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 by:**

- the delivery body concerned
- the Community Infrastructure Levy or
- the Council's own standard charges through legal agreements

**So as to be as widely available as possible, the provision of major services and facilities will be directed, as appropriate, towards the Main Towns, regeneration areas, Key Service Villages and Growth Locations as set out in the spatial policy**

**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 immediate local area.**

**The loss, or significant reduction of, existing services and facilities will be resisted unless:**

- there is sufficient evidence that they are no longer viable or needed or
- satisfactory alternatives 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.

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.

**ISSUES FOR DELIVERY**

The delivery of the Core Strategy as set out is perhaps the most important (and potentially difficult) part of the whole LDF process. Without delivery, the Strategy for the future will not be achieved.

However the Strategy does not rely on simply the granting or refusing of planning permission by the Council. There is now the expectation that the CS will act as a central strategy statement for the council corporately, and all the partners which have a direct role or influence in delivering its objectives.

**PARTNERSHIPS FOR DELIVERY- THE ROLE OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL, LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND COUNTY COUNCIL**

It is critical to the success of the Core Strategy and subsequent DPDs that they are fully embraced in the internal strategies and plans of both the District Council, County Council and the partners in the LSP.

Most of the key services are within the control of these bodies so they have a direct influence on their delivery as part of the strategy. These are listed in appendix?????

In addition the District Council and the LSP can act as exemplars of good practise to others. In particular, the following are likely to play an important part in the implementation of the CS and subsequent LDF documents:

**BDC**

- Planning Committee
- Cabinet
- All Local Committees
- LDF Panel
- Economic Development Partnership Board
- Transport Partnership Panel
- Cultural Partnership Panel

**ECC**

- Learning services
- Social Services
- Highways and Transportation

**LSP**

- BDC ( services listed above)
- Mid Essex Primary Care Trust
- Essex Police
- Essex County Council ( services listed above)
- Essex LAA

In addition to its role as a partner in the LSP, the district council is actively working with neighbouring councils and various voluntary and business groups to make delivery happen.

### **Growth Area Funding**

Braintree Council and Chelmsford Borough Council have been jointly awarded £11m Growth Area Funding by the government to support the delivery of housing, employment and associated infrastructure over the period 2008 to 2011. The amount available in 2008/9 for Braintree is £1.75m capital and £101k revenue (figures rounded)

It is intended to use these sums over the coming year for a range of projects including small scale infrastructure, land assembly and consultants fees for additional studies.

## **DELIVERY PROPOSALS FOR THE CORE STRATEGY**

Set out below is how it is conceived that the various parts of the Strategy will be delivered, both through the “planning system” and by other mechanisms.

### **THE SPATIAL STRATEGY**

The overall strategy sets out the broad location for development in the district over the life of the plan.

#### ***Delivery through planning permission and the planning process***

All developments of any size will require planning permission from the Council. It will be relatively straightforward for the Council, as planning authority, to make sure that the strategy is followed.

#### ***Delivery by other means***

Many of the developments and actions that will be needed to make the strategy work in practice will be the responsibility of a wide range of bodies. These bodies will have to make sure that their own plans include the necessary projects to bring about the proper delivery of the Strategy.

### **THE ENVIRONMENT**

#### ***Delivery through planning permission and the planning process***

Many of the strategies and policies in the plan to protect and enhance the district's environment will be achieved through the development control process. For example, the quality of new development, the protection of listed buildings or the securing of alternative energy sources for development, will all be enabled through that process.

#### ***Delivery by other means***

There are significant actions which can affect the environment where planning permission is not required. For example organisations make individual decisions such as how they manage their estates, vehicle fleets and travel plans for their workforce. All can impact on the local and wider environments and therefore have consequences for this Strategy.

The Council itself also has significant responsibilities for influencing impacts on the environment through its building control, estates, leisure and countryside management services.

## HOUSING

### ***Delivery through planning permission and the planning process***

Housing, including affordable housing, will continue to be delivered by the housing industry through the private sector market, and Registered Social Landlords, by the granting of planning permission for new developments on suitable sites with appropriate conditions or legal agreements. The Council's Housing Strategy Team will seek to ensure that the delivery of affordable housing is secured through section 106 agreements, linked to the CIL or tariff.

### ***Delivery by other means***

The Council is currently reviewing its Housing Strategy and it is likely that many of the priorities will support all the Guiding Principles.

These links are shown in the table below.

<b>Housing Strategy Priority</b>	<b>Related Core Strategy Guiding Principles</b>
Improve housing choices and mobility	Promoting and delivering a sustainable future
Improve the condition of housing, especially for vulnerable people	The protection and enhancement of the District's natural and built environment
Prevent and reduce homelessness and reduce the use of temporary housing	Promoting and delivering a sustainable future
Address the housing and support needs of vulnerable people	Promoting and delivering a sustainable future
Improve the physical and social environment of our neighbourhoods	The protection and enhancement of the District's natural and built environment
Minimise the environmental impact of new housing and reduce the impact of existing homes	Promoting and delivering a sustainable future
Make sure that new housing supports local economic wellbeing	Delivering the development we need
Improve the use of existing housing	Delivering the development we need

In addition, the housing priorities will assist in implementing several of the other policy themes set out in the Core Strategy.

## INFRASTRUCTURE, SERVICES AND FACILITIES

### ***Delivery through planning permission and the planning process***

The Strategy and subsequent planning documents will set out a range of requirements for infrastructure, services and facilities. Locations or sites will be reserved for these in later plans to make sure that they are developed when and where they are needed. These will be delivered as part of planning permissions for large developments with appropriate conditions and/or legal agreements to secure funding, or by granting planning permission separately.

### ***Delivery by other means***

The Strategy will require commitments from all involved in service provision (including the Council and other public bodies and agencies) that their own strategies will take into account the development strategies of the district and make funding available accordingly.

The voluntary sector is likely to be an important vehicle for delivering these types of facilities and services, especially where they are relatively small scale and serve local communities and neighbourhoods. In this context, the LSP and Parish Councils (through Parish Plans, Village Design Statements etc) will play a central role, especially in relation to delivery in the villages and rural areas.

The new growth area funding will be of major significance, and can be used to fund or pump prime the many smaller initiatives that would be beneficial.

Details of potential infrastructure requirements, sources of funding, and the bodies responsible for delivery, are set out in Appendix ? ). These may need to be reviewed and revised as the Core Strategy progresses to submission.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### ***Delivery through planning permission and the planning process***

The Council as planning authority will allocate suitable sites in the growth locations to cater for future employment development, either as sole uses, or as part of mixed use developments. Development may be limited to certain types of commercial use depending on the location and its likely impacts.

It will also ensure, through the granting of appropriate planning permissions, that new developments within the Regeneration Areas contain some employment – generating development. This will vary in scale and type depending on the location and potential of the location and the balance of other uses being proposed.

In the rural areas, a flexible approach will be indeed to ensure that local jobs continue to be available, without damaging the environment or promoting developments that are not sustainable.

### ***Delivery by other means***

Securing jobs and the right sort of development is likely to be a significant issue for delivery. The allocation of land and the granting of planning permissions in themselves may well not be sufficient to ensure that the right jobs are delivered at the right place at the right time. More proactive initiatives may well be needed by both this Council and its partners to secure such developments in the longer term. This could include land assembly, pump-priming the required services for the land and robust marketing.

The current initiatives being taken by the Council in respect of the town centre regeneration locations area good examples of this sort of proactive approach. The future development of a Business /Innovation Park may provide another good opportunity for this approach.

The Council will also work with a range of economic development partners, including EEDA , the County Council , the Haven Gateway Partnership ,local business groups and developers, to proactively market the district for economic development.

### **DELIVERING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND JOBS**

**East of England Plan**

**EERA Economic Strategy**

**BDC economic strategy**

**Private sector investment**

**Compulsory purchase powers**

**Development control & site allocations DPDs**

### **THE GROWTH LOCATIONS - BRAINTREE AND WITHAM**

#### ***Delivery through planning permission and the planning process***

It is anticipated that the housing and employment developments will be taken forward by the development industry in the normal way. This will also apply to affordable housing.

Details of the sites will be determined in the Site Allocations DPD and further details may be worked up through development briefs/master plans. These will include requirements for such aspects as open space, education, health and access.

The details of the developments will be approved through the submission of planning applications. Appropriate planning gain and infrastructure will be secured through the CIL /tariffs by means of section 106 agreements .

The sites may be phased by the granting or withholding of planning permissions, depending on the monitoring of development overall and especially the need to deliver affordable housing. The list of matters that may be covered by the planning permissions/master plans might be:

#### ***This list is not intended to be exhaustive nor in any order of priority.***

- Extended and new footpaths, cycle ways and bridleways.
- Highway improvements ( extended roads and new /improved junctions)
- Extended or new public transport services.
- New or upgrading water, sewage gas and electricity supplies/systems, SUDS.
- Landscaping/planting, ecological sites.
- Local shops, health care, education , leisure and community facilities including formal /informal open space (the extension or upgrading of existing local facilities may be acceptable depending on the site and the type/amount of development.)
- Local job opportunities (there may be suitable employment sites nearby that could offer local jobs depending on the location of the site)



### ***Delivery by other means***

Outside the planning regime, the long term development of these areas will require a proactive effort from the council, public and voluntary sector partners and developers, to deliver the sort of sustainable development as envisaged in the CS and required by national and regional policies.

The objective of creating mixed developments that have strong links to the existing town centres, services, local jobs and leisure facilities makes such joint initiatives essential.

In particular, health, education and other essential services will need to be planned for long term so they can be delivered in the right way.

## **DELIVERING THE GROWTH LOCATIONS**

**East of England plan**

**BDC SMAA**

**BDC SHLAA**

**Housing Trajectory and AMR**

**Development control & site allocations DPDs**

**Master plans/Development Briefs**

**Public and voluntary sector bodies and agencies**

**Private sector developers**

**Compulsory purchase powers**

## **DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS**

Contributions from developers will be a primary means of delivering many aspects of the Strategy. Affordable housing, open space, transport and education, are just a few examples of where direct provision either by funding or in kind is achieved. Such funding has been growing over recent years and there are now significant calls on developer funding for an ever wider range of “planning gain “. However securing this funding is often haphazard, and can involve lengthy, costly and often futile negotiations which do not deliver the required objectives.

A more robust and certain method of securing funding from development has therefore been the concern of government for some time and it has decided to implement the “Community Infrastructure Levy ( CIL) ”. The full details of how this would operate have yet to be approved.

Although any funding from development is unlikely to be welcomed by developers on principle, a system that is both certain and fair is most likely to find favour.

Many Councils, including Chelmsford and Colchester are also favouring a “Tariff” approach, along the lines of the CIL and it was supported by the Chelmsford inspector at examination.

***Braintree council sees merit in the certainty on the CIL/tariff and is therefore proposing that this approach be adopted for securing developer contributions..***

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 GLOSSARY AND DEFINITIONS

### Acronyms used:

Initials	What they stand for
BDC	Braintree District Council
DPD	Development Plan Document
ECC	Essex County Council
EERA	East of England Regional Assembly
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
KSV	Key Service Villages
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LDF	Local Development Framework
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
LTP	Local Transport Plan 2006-2011
PCT	Mid Essex Primary Care Trust
RSS	Regional Spatial Strategy
SCI	Statement of Community Involvement
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment

# DRAFT

## Explanations of some of the terms used in this Strategy:

Term used	What it means
Brownfield site	Land that has been previously developed , usually but not always within the existing built-up area of a town or village.
Community Priority	
Core Strategy	The overarching planning policy document in the Local Development Framework, which sets out the broad planning strategy for the district. .All subsequent documents must be in accord with it.
Development Plan Documents	Statutory Planning Documents that set out the councils policies and proposals for the district .They are subject to and examination by an inspector.
East of England Plan	The highest level plan for the East of England .All local council documents must be in accord with it.
Employment Land Review	A technical study prepared for the council which looked at the future needs for employment land and where it should be located
Exception Sites	Sites for affordable housing on land where development would not normally be allowed-hence they are “exceptions” to policy.
Greenfield site	Land which has not been developed before, usually but not always, agricultural land.
Growth Locations	Areas where the council is proposing that new development should be located. They are situated on the edge of the main towns of Braintree and Witham
Issues and Options Report	The first consultation document produced by the council at the start of the Core Strategy preparation process in 2007 This can be seen on the councils website or can be provided on request
Key Diagram	A map showing in diagrammatic term the overall planning strategy for the district , including areas for development
Key Service Villages	The larger villages in the district ( over 3000 population ) which act as local centres for the smaller villages and rural areas around. The Key Service Villages in the Braintree District are: Coggeshall Earls Colne Hatfield Peverel Kelvedon Sible Hedingham and Silver End
Lifetime Homes Standard	A set of layout standards applied to housing to enable it to be sued by people throughout their lives without having to move. Usually includes features to cater for disabilities
Main Towns	The main urban centres in the district where most development is to be located. The Main Towns in the Braintree District are Braintree, Witham and Halstead

## DRAFT

Mixed development	Development that includes more than one use within the development area or can be easily linked to other uses nearby. Can include such uses as housing , employment , services and leisure facilities
Other Villages	The small villages in the district that are defined by a village envelope.
Core Planning Policy	A policy that sets out in broad terms the council's strategy on a particular issue, e.g employment.
Proposals Map	A detailed plan on an ordnance survey base showing where particular land uses, policies and planning criteria will apply. Usually used to assist the council in deciding planning applications. Must be in accord with the Key Diagram
Rural Areas	Those parts of the district that are not defined as being within an urban area, key village or small village. Can include a number of small hamlets.
Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment	
Settlement Strategy	
Site Allocation Development Plan	
Spatial Policy	
Statement of Community Involvement	
Sub-Region	
Urban Capacity Study	
Spatial	