

# Minutes



## Local Plan Sub-Committee 3rd August 2023

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J Abbott	Apologies	J Martin	No
K Bowers	Yes	A Munday	Yes
L Bowers-Flint	Yes	I Parker	Yes
G Butland	Yes	F Ricci	Apologies
J Coleridge	Apologies	G Spray (Chairman)	Yes
T Cunningham	Yes	T Walsh	Apologies
M Fincken	Yes		

Councillor D Holland and Councillor J Edwards were also in attendance.

At the commencement of the meeting the Chairman of the Local Plan Sub-Committee was pleased to welcome new Members of the Sub-Committee and Members who had been re-appointed to the Sub-Committee.

The Chairman was also pleased to welcome Ms Laura Johnson, representing Essex County Council Place Services, who was attending the meeting to provide advice and information regarding Agenda Item 5 – ‘Bradford Street Conservation Area – Character Appraisal and Management Plan’ and Agenda Item 6 – ‘Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area – Character Appraisal and Management Plan’.

### 1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**INFORMATION:** The following interests were declared:

Councillor L Bowers-Flint declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 5 – ‘Bradford Street Conservation Area – Character Appraisal and Management Plan’ as the elected Member for the Bocking Division of Essex County Council.

Councillor T Cunningham declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 6 – ‘Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area – Character Appraisal and Management Plan’.

Plan' as the elected Member for the Braintree Town Division of Essex County Council.

Councillor T Cunningham declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest also in Agenda Item 7 – 'Norwich to Tilbury 'N2T' Grid Reinforcement – Consultation June 2023' as an Elected Member of Essex County Council and, in particular, as the Deputy to the Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning, who would be submitting a response to National Grid's consultation on behalf of Essex County Council.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillors remained in the meeting, unless stated otherwise, and took part in the discussion when the Items were considered.

## 2 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Plan Sub-Committee held on 30th March 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 3 **QUESTION TIME**

**INFORMATION:** One statement was made regarding Agenda Item 7 – 'Norwich to Tilbury 'N2T' Grid Reinforcement – Consultation June 2023'. The statement was made by Councillor D Holland in his capacity as an Elected Member of Braintree District Council. The statement was made during Question Time.

Principally, these Minutes record decisions taken only and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions.

## 4 **BRADFORD STREET CONSERVATION AREA – CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**INFORMATION:** Consideration was given to a report on the proposed 'Bradford Street Conservation Area – Character Appraisal and Management Plan'. The Plan was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

In considering the report, Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee were advised of the following three typographical amendments to the report - Paragraph 4.3: the removal of the penultimate sentence; Paragraph 4.4: the replacement of the first sentence with 'Bradford Street is considered as one area and not divided into character areas'; and Paragraph 4.6: the replacement of 'Bradford Street' for 'Bocking' in the second line.

Members of the Sub-Committee were advised that Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 placed a duty on Local Planning Authorities to review Conservation Areas within their District from time to

time, and that the Council had appointed Essex County Council Place Services to prepare Character Appraisal and Management Plans for a number of Conservation Areas. The Sub-Committee was requested to approve the 'Bradford Street Conservation Area - Character Appraisal and Management Plan' (CACAMP) and to adopt it for use by Braintree District Council as a material consideration when carrying out its planning functions.

As part of the review of the Conservation Area, it was proposed that the Braintree Conservation Area, which had originally been designated in 1969, should be divided into two separate areas covering 'Bradford Street' and 'Braintree Town Centre'. The separation would reflect the differing characters and history of each area and it would remove areas which were not considered to be of sufficient architectural, or historic merit. The CACAMP provided an analysis of the Conservation Area, including its historic environment and unique character. It sought also to identify any issues and to recommend how these might be addressed in the short-term and in the long-term. It was proposed that the Bradford Street CACAMP should be considered as one area and not divided into character areas. It was also proposed that the area should be extended to include a larger part of Church Lane, a small area of River Mead, and a small area of open green space and a brick folly at St James Road.

The CACAMP had been published for public consultation between 10th January 2022 and 7th February 2022 and a virtual webinar event had been held on 19th January 2022. A total of 17 comments had been submitted. Details of the comments, the Officers' responses, and any action proposed were set out in Appendix 2 to the report. In particular, concern had been expressed about the impact of heavy traffic, pedestrian safety and parking difficulties. Whilst it was acknowledged that these concerns were keenly felt, attempts to resolve them could have far wider implications for planning and transport policy for the town as a whole. Furthermore, any improvements would be the responsibility of Essex County Council as the Highway Authority. Consideration of these issues lay outside the scope of the Conservation Area review process. However, Braintree District Council could exercise some control through its Local Plan policies when determining planning applications to ensure that future development had an acceptable impact on its surroundings in terms of traffic, access and parking. The CACAMP had been amended to give more prominence to highway issues.

In discussing this Item, Members of the Sub-Committee commended the Plan, which highlighted the importance of the Bradford Street area. It was noted that Essex Highways was aware of the highway issues that had been identified and that it was seeking to resolve some of these. It was also noted that funding was being made available for 'blue plaques' to be placed on some properties in Bradford Street to identify notable former occupiers. It was queried if funding could be provided to enable heritage signs to be erected to direct people to places of interest and it was

suggested that Braintree Museum may wish to mount an exhibition to highlight the heritage of the Bradford Street area.

**DECISION:** That the 'Bradford Street Conservation Area - Character Appraisal and Management Plan', including the addition and removal of parts of the Conservation Area as set out within the Plan, be approved for use by Braintree District Council as a material consideration when carrying out its planning function, and that Officers be authorised to correct minor updating, factual and typographical errors within the Plan.

5 **BRAINTREE TOWN CENTRE CONSERVATION AREA – CHARACTER APPRAISAL AND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

**INFORMATION:** Consideration was given to a report on the proposed 'Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area – Character Appraisal and Management Plan'. The Plan was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

In an amendment to the report, Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee were advised that the new Conservation Area boundary line South of St Michael's Church had been amended to retain a terrace of houses, Nos. 4 – 14 St Michael's Road, within the Conservation Area.

Members of the Sub-Committee were advised that Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 placed a duty on Local Planning Authorities to review Conservation Areas within their District from time to time, and that the Council had appointed Essex County Council Place Services to prepare Character Appraisal and Management Plans for a number of Conservation Areas. The Sub-Committee was requested to approve the 'Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area - Character Appraisal and Management Plan' (CACAMP) and to adopt it for use by Braintree District Council as a material consideration when carrying out its planning functions.

As part of the review of the Conservation Area, it was proposed that the Braintree Conservation Area should be divided into two separate areas covering 'Bradford Street' and 'Braintree Town Centre'. The separation would reflect the differing characters and history of each area and it would remove areas which were not considered to be of sufficient architectural, or historic merit. The CACAMP provided an analysis of the Conservation Area, including its historic environment and unique character. It sought also to identify any issues and to recommend how these might be addressed in the short-term and in the long-term. The main changes to the Plan were summarised in the report. The Conservation Area had been divided into six character areas namely London Road; the commercial core; The Mills; Victoria Street/Mount Road/Woodfield Road; Rayne Road; and The Parks.

The CACAMP had been published for public consultation between 10th January 2022 and 7th February 2022 and a virtual webinar event had been held on 19th January 2022. A total of six comments had been submitted. Details of the comments, the Officers' responses, and any action proposed were set out in Appendix 2 to the report. The CACAMP had been amended accordingly.

In discussing this Item Members of the Sub-Committee commended the Plan, which highlighted the heritage of Braintree Town Centre.

**DECISION:** That the 'Braintree Town Centre Conservation Area - Character Appraisal and Management Plan', including the addition and removal of parts of the Conservation Area as set out within the Plan, be approved for use by Braintree District Council as a material consideration when carrying out its planning function, and that Officers be authorised to correct minor updating, factual and typographical errors within the Plan.

## 6 **NORWICH TO TILBURY 'N2T' GRID REINFORCEMENT – CONSULTATION** **JUNE 2023**

**INFORMATION:** Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee considered a report regarding non-statutory consultation under Section 42 of the Planning Act 2008 in respect of a proposal by National Grid to provide 400kv grid reinforcement between Norwich and Tilbury ('N2T'). This proposal had previously been known as East Anglia Green and it was a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. The report provided an overview of the proposal and its likely impact. Members of the Sub-Committee were requested to endorse the Council's proposed response to National Grid, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, to enable this to be submitted by the deadline of 21st August 2023. It was noted that a previous non-statutory consultation had taken place in June 2022.

The 'N2T' project proposed the provision of a new 400kv electricity transmission line over a distance of roughly 180km from Norwich to Tilbury and a new 400kv connection sub-station in the Tendring District. An overhead line, including pylons and conductors, would be provided across most of the route, with underground cabling being provided through and near to the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in part of the Braintree District where the route crossed an existing 400kv overhead line. Since the previous consultation, new information had been provided about the location of the proposed pylons and sealing end compounds. Further information/justification had also been provided on strategic options, such as an undersea route.

A number of documents had been made available as part of the consultation process, including the 'Project Background Document 2023', which provided information about the current draft proposals. This document referred to the route of the proposals north-west of Fairstead in the Braintree District, where it was

proposed that a small section should be placed underground, with cable sealing end compounds provided at either end, to cross beneath the existing 400kv overhead line. It was likely that a haul road would be required at Fairstead to serve the sealing end compounds due to the restraints of the existing road network, which included 'protected lanes'.

The 'Strategic Options Backcheck and Review June 2023' document outlined the reasons why changes were required to the transmission system in East Anglia. The document showed that without reinforcement, the capacity of the existing network in East Anglia was insufficient to accommodate connection to proposed new power sources in the area. The document set out different route options for high voltage cables, including an alternative off-shore route where this could be achieved. The document indicated that an off-shore route would be considerably more expensive than alternative on-shore routes and that it would not provide sufficient capacity for energy generation.

It was proposed that the Council should submit an in principle objection to National Grid regarding their proposal on the basis that alternative options, which might overcome the impact of an on-shore option, had not been fully explored or considered. Specialist advice had been sought by the Council with respect to the possible impact of the proposals in terms of built heritage; arboriculture; geology and hydrogeology; air quality; noise and vibration; ecology; and landscape. This advice was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and it would be included as part of the Council's response. The response would also make reference to Braintree District Local Plan Policy 'LPP69 – Protected Lanes', which protected a number of lanes within the District, which had historic and landscape value within the countryside. This was relevant to the route in the vicinity of Fairstead where it was proposed that cabling should be placed underground. In addition, the response would refer to tourism as it was considered that the erection of additional pylons would have a significant impact on tourism within the District.

Once the current consultation period had concluded, it was anticipated that National Grid would conduct a statutory period of public consultation on its proposals in 2024 and apply for a Development Consent Order in 2025. If approved, it was anticipated that construction of the scheme could commence in 2027 and that it could become operational in 2031.

In discussing this Item, Members requested that the Council's proposed response should be amended by the deletion of the words 'including support for renewable energy production in the right places' from paragraph 1.2; to the addition of a new paragraph 4.4 under the heading 'Pylons/Compounds' to refer to haul routes and how these were to be constructed on, and subsequently removed from agricultural land, and the remediation measures to be taken to restore land quality; and to the addition of the word 'well-being' after the word 'residents' in paragraph 5.21 (re-numbered to 5.22).

**DECISION:** That the Council's response to consultation on the 'Norwich to Tilbury 'N2T' Grid Reinforcement – Consultation June 2023' be approved and forwarded to National Grid, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the Chairman of the Local Plan Sub-Committee being authorised to approve changes to the response in order to reflect the points raised by Members at the meeting and as summarised above.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.15pm.

Councillor G Spray  
(Chairman)