

Braintree District Council: 15th December 2020 Planning Committee

Chairwoman and Members of the Planning Committee, this application captures the final adjustments to the layout and additional requirements for Braintree Electric Forecourt®, the first of over 100 Electric Forecourts® designed to make renewable energy the preferred fuel for transportation.

Braintree Electric Forecourt® is now operational, opening softly under strict COVID protocols last Monday 7th December. The site serves principally passing traffic on the strategic road network as well as Braintree residents, but will also provide charging infrastructure to the occupants of the Horizon 120 Business and Innovation Park as well as to a transitioning taxi fleet and the future electrification of the local bus network. The site will have strong walking and cycling with strong links between the Forecourt, the emerging Business and Innovation Park, Great Notley Country Park and via the underpass to the wider Braintree Town.

We are offering infrastructure FIRST approach; we want people to come to the Forecourt who do not drive electric and for them to realise charging can be a very positive experience. Our proposal, aside from the minor adjustments to the cooling unit our retailer requires, is to further enhance the visibility of the GRIDSERVE building. This has been designed to be a structure of architectural merit with optimal energy performance and on-site energy generation.

Views heading south along the A131 of the structure are already well-defined, but heading north, the building is presently only seen when you have almost driven past the structure. Whilst our original submission included removal of a much greater extent of the shelter belt planted, our proposals have been substantially reduced to remove a total of just 14x trees or scrub (all categorised as low value). Our proposals include a substantial compensatory scheme: 15x new native trees and a further 150x hedgerow whips, along the northern boundary of the site designed to further soften the site approach. The trees will be planted as strong specimens with the provision in planning to ensure they are retained and flourish.

Braintree Electric Forecourt® is at the forefront of the UK's emerging EV charging infrastructure and already demonstrates a clear commitment from the District Council towards delivering a net zero economy. Our revised scheme will further promote the legibility and visibility of the UK's first Electric Forecourt®, whilst being proportionate to local environmental constraints. I therefore respectfully ask Members to approve the variations we are seeking.