



# LOCAL PLAN | ISSUES AND SCOPING

SUMMARY BOOKLET

JANUARY 2015

## Future Challenges

The Council is starting work on a new Local Plan. The plan will set out the basis for working with partners to provide for future local needs for homes, employment, and business sites, whilst protecting the most valuable countryside and maintaining a high quality of life. Planning applications, whatever their size and proposed use, are assessed for approval against the policies contained in the Local Plan.

## Introduction to the consultation

- The Issues and Scoping consultation is one of the first stages of producing a new Local Plan
- The Council needs to draw up a clear and up-to-date Local Plan that reflects the views of local people on how they wish their area to develop.
- It is the first opportunity for you to have your say on the future of the District.

## Introduction to the document

The Local Plan Issues and Scoping document highlights a number of important issues for the District and possible strategies or options to address them. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list but is designed to stimulate debate and discussion.

**The Issues and Scoping document does not allocate specific sites for development.**

The document is structured around the three main elements of sustainable development:

Economic – “A Prosperous District”  
Social – “Creating Better Places”  
Environmental – “Protecting the Environment”



## Chapter Summaries

### A Strong Economy

This chapter considers the balance between jobs and homes. The District is well located to support business growth and inward investment but competition from major towns, London and Stansted Airport for employees means that commuting levels are high. Options are raised such as whether new employment sites should be located near to existing ones and how employment should be sought in rural areas. The quality and availability of education is also considered as it is important to ensure that people within the District have the opportunity to meet their full potential.

### Shops and Services

An increase in retail provision to meet the demand of new housing and growth within the District is likely to be needed. This chapter considers how shopping habits are changing, and how town centres should evolve to reflect this and remain vibrant. Out of town provision, rural services, and markets are also highlighted.

### Homes

Government legislation requires local authorities to **“boost significantly their supply of housing”**. Projections show that the Braintree District’s population will continue to rise over the next fifteen years. This is due to longer life expectancy and greater numbers of people moving into the District than out of it. In addition more people are living on their own, or in smaller groups than before. The chapter considers the mix and types of housing needed to suit these changes, and also considers issues of affordability and provision for Gypsies and Travellers.

**New research has led to an increase in the number of homes the District needs to provide over the coming years.** The adopted *‘Core Strategy’* (2011) sets an annual average target of 272 homes to be built in the District. Recent research has indicated that now between 750 and 950 new homes will be required to be built every year until 2033 to meet the needs of the District’s growing population. The Homes chapter looks at options for how and where this growth should be located (the spatial strategy); for example whether they should be dispersed across the District or whether a number of new settlements should be developed?

### Transport and Infrastructure

Braintree District is substantially rural and cars are the primary means of transport for many residents. Consideration is given to how this reliance on cars can be reduced and the use of more sustainable modes of transport encouraged. There are particular stretches of roads or junctions in the District that can become congested. The chapter considers the infrastructure needed to support new growth and key priorities for infrastructure improvements. It asks where growth is best located in relation to transport infrastructure.

### Community Facilities

Community facilities are things such as local shops, public houses, sports venues, places of worship and other meeting places. The Council has to plan positively for the provision of community facilities and other local services to make sure people don’t have to travel too far to access the services they need. This chapter considers how facilities and services can be maintained, developed and modernised in a way that is sustainable and retained for the benefit of the community.

### Creating high quality spaces

As a District with different towns and villages, each with its own unique character, there is a challenge in providing significant development. Consideration must be given to design, landscape and heritage issues. This chapter considers the promotion of high quality and innovative design and how new development can be integrated into existing areas.

### A healthy and active District

A key role of the Local Plan is to provide for development in a way that supports and encourages active and healthy lifestyles. This chapter considers provision of recreation facilities such as open space, and how development can be designed to encourage people to be active in their everyday lives, for example by providing footpaths and cycleways. Meeting the needs and demands of an aging population, lifetime homes and age appropriate housing are also highlighted.

### Climate Change and Renewable Energy

Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge facing the world today and new residential, retail and commercial development needs to consider the impact of climate change and be built with climate resilience in mind. This chapter considers flood risk, surface water runoff, and SUDS

(Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, a term used to describe a wide range of works that can reduce the flow to sewerage and drainage systems). Water efficiency measures can minimise demand, whilst renewable energy and the scale and types of schemes that may be appropriate for the District are highlighted in this chapter.

### Nature Conservation and Landscape Character

Braintree District is predominately rural with distinctive and attractive landscapes. A balance needs to be achieved between development, use of the countryside as a recreational resource and the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. Landscape Character Assessment is a technique that has been developed for the analysis, description and classification of the landscape. This chapter considers how habitats can be protected and enhanced, pollution controlled, and how development can draw inspiration from setting, through location, sympathetic design, proportionate scale and suitable use of materials.

### Evidence Base

The Local Plan must be based on relevant up-to date evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics and prospects of the area. The Local Plan Issues and Scoping document lists the evidence based documents we already have, or will be putting together, to support the new Local Plan.

## What is the purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report that is being published alongside the Local Plan Issues and Scoping document?

It is vital for the Council to consider the potential **significant** impacts of new development before it is allowed to happen and to weigh up alternatives. Part of the way that this is done is to subject the Local Plan to a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment at each stage of its production.

The first stage in this process is *‘Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope’*. A Scoping Report has been

produced which has reviewed other relevant plans, policies and programmes, considered the current state of the environment, identified key environmental issues or problems which may be affected by the Local Plan, and sets out the 'SA Framework' which contains specific objectives against which the likely effects of the Local Plan can be assessed.

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## Have your say...

We invite your comments on the Local Plan Issues and Scoping document especially in response to the issues it raises.

The Council encourages people to submit comments online. Although representations can be made and submitted using the form provided, if you register to submit comments online, you can update your own contact details as needed, and sign up to receive e-mails informing you when new documents are available for consultation. The consultation portal can be found via: [www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanscoping](http://www.braintree.gov.uk/localplanscoping)

You will be asked to register or login before being able to comment on the documents listed below but you can read the documents without registering. The portal is also used to maintain the mailing list.

Written comments should be sent to:

Planning Policy, Braintree District Council, Causeway House, Braintree, Essex, CM7 9HB.

### All comments should be received by 5pm on Friday 6th March 2015

If you have any questions about the consultation please contact the Planning Policy team on 01376 551414

Or e-mail [localplan@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:localplan@braintree.gov.uk)

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## Come and meet us to share your views

We are holding drop-in sessions from 4-8 pm. at these venues; where you can see the documents and discuss them with us, and learn more about the development plan process in general:

- Tuesday 3rd February - Witham Public Hall
- Thursday 5th February - Halstead Queens Hall
- Wednesday 11th February - Braintree Town Hall

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) team will be holding a short presentation at Witham Public Hall on 3rd February at 6 p.m. whilst the drop in session is running.

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## What happens next?

This is the first stage in developing a new Local Plan for Braintree District. The Council will use the comments and suggestions that it receives on this document to help to develop preferred policy options in a draft plan. That draft plan will be the subject of the next stage of public consultation in late 2015 before it is formally submitted to the Secretary of State.

The key stages in the Local Plan preparation, and the planned timetable, are:

- 1. Issues and Scope:** to consider what the main aims and objectives are going to be for the Local Plan (January 2015)
  - 2. Draft Local Plan:** Provides a first draft of the Plan, with specific policy proposals and sites for particular uses, including areas identified for future new homes; employment and green space (consultation on this stage late 2015)
  - 3. Submission Local Plan:** Takes into account changes made following consultation on the Draft Local Plan. This is the version of the Plan that will be formally submitted to the Secretary of State and Planning Inspector (consultation on this stage Spring 2016, followed by submission Summer 2016)
  - 4. Examination in Public:** The Inspector examines the "soundness" of the Plan in a series of round table discussions on different issues, giving individuals and organisations the opportunity to challenge or support the Plan (probably Autumn/Winter 2016)
  - 5. Adoption:** if the Planning Inspector is content that the Plan is sound, then the Council can adopt the Plan, taking on board any relevant recommendations from the Inspector to change the Plan. The Council is aiming for the new Local Plan to be adopted in early 2017.
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