Further Comments on New Examination Documents

Introduction

1 These representations have been produced on behalf of Stebbing Parish Council (SPC) to supplement its earlier representations objecting to the Garden Community being proposed to the West of Braintree (SP8), which expands across from Braintree District into Uttlesford District, and both directly and indirectly significantly impact upon Stebbing.

2 SPC’s Regulation 19 representations refer in detail to the reasons for its objection to the West of Braintree Garden Community proposals, the key reasons being:

- Adverse landscape and heritage impacts;
- Impacts upon the highway network, in particular upon the strategic A120 route which currently suffers from frequent major congestion at Braintree; and
- Serious doubts regarding its overall deliverability.

3 We comment below with regard to the specific content of a number of the new Evidence Base documents currently being subjected to public consultation:

ED27 Infrastructure Delivery Plan Update paper

4 The study suggests that Easton Park and West of Braintree Garden Communities are capable of delivering separate Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) segments with potential for a Stansted to Braintree BRT at a later date1 (our emphasis). This demonstrates the level of current uncertainty that exists regarding both the viability and deliverability of the Bus Rapid Transport system in relation to the proposed West of Braintree Garden Community.

5 The first infrastructure to be provided would be the West of Braintree GC to Braintree link costed at £9.4-13.6 million. The report assumes that this infrastructure is

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1 EXAM Document ED27, Page 1
provided at a point between 2028 and 2033, however, it is acknowledged that timing depends on build out of the WoBGC.

**ED27A Schedules to Infrastructure Delivery Plan update paper**

6 Reference is made to road improvements in relation to West of Braintree including the Dunmow East Junction B1256 (£3 million) and improvements at B1256 / A120 Dunmow Hoblongs junction (£2-10 million). Both of which are planned to be delivered by the end of the Plan period.

7 SPC would point out that in relation to the latter specified highway improvement, the difference between a cost of £2 million and a cost of £10 million is considerable. The identified indicative costs appear to demonstrate the lack of any current certainty regarding actual likely highway scheme costs. There also appears to be further uncertainty regarding their actual funding and the likely contributions that would be funded by the developer, ECC and HE.

8 In its previous presentations, SPC has cast doubt upon the likely adequacy of these schemes to accommodate the growth in traffic that would be generated by the proposed West of Braintree Garden Community. It has highlighted the existing serious congestion issues already pertaining to key sections of the A120.

9 Further reference is made to the initial phases of Rapid Transport infrastructure costing between £9.4-13.6 million. The report refers to the first BRT infrastructure being delivered between 2028 and 2033. However, it states that early delivery of a regular bus service will be on existing roads.

10 As SPC has already highlighted, existing roads in and around Braintree already suffer from significant congestion. Furthermore, it is fully apparent that the inadequate nature of the scheme (particularly the lack of any actual ‘rapid’ element) will mean that it will be incapable of attracting the occupants of new housing away from their cars and onto public transport.

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2 EXAM Document ED27, Page 2
3 EXAM Document ED23A, Page 15
4 EXAM Document ED23A, Page 21
The actual initial public transport offer will in reality be a simple bus service on existing congested roads. It will not be the rapid transit system that was previously promised. This is evident from ED13: Bus Rapid Transport for Uttlesford – Supplementary Technical Study 21 June 2019. It refers to it being entirely possible to utilise lower cost traffic management measures providing priority for BRT alongside other traffic for some sections as long as fast and reliable BRT journey times are realised. It goes on to refer to road space reallocation to public transport and active modes\(^5\).

In relation to Great Dunmow to West of Braintree – up to 2033, specific mention is made of sections of segregated bus lane along the B1256, where deliverable (type 2 segregated, running alongside existing highway where feasible). However, it is acknowledged that there will be mixed running with controls on traffic (Type 3) along the majority of the route. In practice, it is stated that the amount of local access along this route section, and difficulties around enforcement would preclude traffic being restricted to local access only, but that directional signage would seek to discourage use of this road\(^6\).

SPC believes that existing congestion levels in and around Braintree mean that road space reallocation is simply not a realistic or deliverable option.

With regard to the link through West of Braintree and towards Braintree up to 2033, reference is made to a loop of the garden community on a dedicated, segregated route. The use of a loop in this manner is acknowledged as not being ideal from a public transport route planning perspective, as it represents a diversion which will add to journey time, relative to a straighter route alignment\(^7\).

The Bus Rapid Transport Study refers to vehicle restrictions. It acknowledges the points made by SPC and others that the development of the BRT route options has demonstrated that road space in and around existing settlements is restricted, with limited opportunities for convenient routing of the BRT along uncongested roads. Although the exact nature of the challenge is said to be dependent on the route(s) eventually selected, it is specified as being likely that development of the BRT route

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\(^5\) EXAM Document ED13, Page 2
\(^6\) EXAM Document ED13, Page 22
\(^7\) EXAM Document ED13, Page 25
will require specific restrictions on the movement of vehicles along certain corridors. It goes on to state that in ensuring that BRT is fast and reliable, and consistent with a policy of prioritising sustainable modes, a shift in the use of the use of limited road space towards sustainable modes and away from the car will be necessary. This is acknowledged as being challenging around Great Dunmow and Braintree.

16 SPC and others have strong concerns regarding the adverse implications likely to be experienced by the local community should such measures be implemented given the existing congestion levels on the local road network.

17 SPC remains very concerned that the BRT Study states that the demand and cost estimates presented in the report are based on modelling work in which it has been necessary to make a number of assumptions. It is specified that the modelling undertaken is intended to provide a strategic indication of whether the BRT scheme should continue to be examined. It goes on to specify that further detailed modelling work would be required to confirm or revise these estimates as part of a business case process. It adds in a full business case it would be necessary to consider the extent to which the revenue earned by the BRT has been abstracted from existing bus services, and any knock-on effects this might have (e.g. withdrawal of service or increased subsidy requirement).

18 The Parish Council considers that from reading the BRT Study in detail it is based upon assumptions and modelling which may prove to be inaccurate. It and others have referred in their representations and Hearing Statements to the likely weaknesses of any BRT system in achieving modal shift in a location like West of Braintree, which is isolated from any major urban conurbations. As a consequence of this, together with a rapid transit system that is likely only to be a frequent bus service, it must be highly doubtful whether the projected levels of public transport use and modal shift will be achievable.

19 It is also concerning that in relation to sustainable travel – rapid transit the costs of the Cressing Loop and Freeport Transit Hub are stated in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan Annex Schedules: July 2019 as being ‘Unknown at this time’ and to a more detailed study being prepared by NEGC. Again, this calls into question the weight

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8 EXAM Document ED13, Page 37
9 EXAM Document ED13, Page 43
that can be given to the actual likelihood of deliverability and viability of parts of the
promised Garden Community infrastructure.

**ED43 GL Hearn for Andrewsfield New Settlement consortium: Housing Trajectory for West of Braintree Garden Community**

20 Notwithstanding its opposition in principle to the proposed West of Braintree Garden Community, SPC welcomes the fact that UDC has proposed to amend the Draft Plan to identify that instead of 970 dwellings, only 640 dwellings are now being identified for delivery within the current Plan period (up to 2033).

21 However, the Parish Council considers this to be further evidence to back up its earlier representations which cast considerable doubt on the likely deliverability of the Uttlesford element of the West of Braintree Garden Community within the Plan period. Particularly given the uncertainty and delay in connection with the North Essex Joint Strategic Plan.

22 SPC Totally disagrees with the statement on page 2 of the GL Hearn letter that “there are no significant infrastructure requirements that would prevent delivery of at least 970 dwellings at the WBGC within Uttlesford within the Plan period” and that “there are no environmental constraints that prevent delivery of at least 970 dwellings at the WBGC within Uttlesford within the Plan period”. SPC considers that there are significant heritage, landscape and transport constraints which demonstrate precisely why there are very strong environmental constraints relating to the West of Braintree Garden Community. These have been set out previously in considerable depth within the Parish Council’s submitted evidence to the Examination.

23 Furthermore, given the fact that the Braintree element of the West of Braintree Garden Community is required to proceed prior to the Uttlesford element if a sustainable community is to be created, it is evident that even if the West of Braintree Garden Community is eventually endorsed by both the North Essex and Uttlesford Local Plan Examination Inspectors, the deliverability of the Uttlesford element of it within the Plan period must remain highly doubtful. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that the Uttlesford element of 640 dwellings can actually be delivered, and therefore it must be deleted as an allocation if the Draft Plan is to be found sound.
ED44 G L Hearn for Galliard Homes: Matter 5 OAN for housing & employment Policies SP3 and SP4

24  See above comments in respect of ED43.

25  SPC supports the fact that the assumed annual delivery at West of Braintree in total across both Authority areas should not exceed the 300 dwellings per annum assumed delivery rate built into the housing trajectories for the other Garden Communities at Easton Park and North Uttlesford.

26  However, SPC continues to question whether the reduced West of Braintree delivery figure of 640 dwellings would actually be achievable within the Plan period.

27  ED44B refers to the fact that whilst Galliard Homes support the Garden City Principles as set out in the Local Plan, its support is contingent on understanding the meaning, implications and mechanics of these principles – notably the first principle concerning the question of community owned land, neither of which may be necessary to deliver a successful and sustainable Garden Community.10

28  Reference is then made to a recent meeting it had attended with NEGC at which the broad approach to land value capture was outlined. A number of financial figures were said to have been mentioned, which Galliard Homes did not yet understand, and as a result requires a much more detailed explanation of the proposed model.

29  As a consequence, Galliard Homes state that they are keen to explore other models for delivering the Garden Community which will still achieve the Garden Community objectives (other than land value capture and community land ownership)11.

30  The above demonstrates that in relation to West of Braintree Garden Community, there is still considerable dispute between the site promoter and NEGC regarding the fundamentals of how it would actually be delivered. It was evident during the course of the Examination Hearing Sessions that the site promoters of both Easton Park and North Uttlesford Garden Communities demonstrated far greater levels of agreement between themselves and NEGC. Again this demonstrates the lack of weight that can

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10 EXAM Document ED44B, Paragraph 4
11 EXAM Document ED44B, Paragraph 5
be given to the actual deliverability of West of Braintree, and the lack of soundness if it were to remain an allocation within the Draft Plan.

**ED47C Rapid Transit System for North Essex**

31 It is not evident from the document how precisely the Uttlesford element of the West of Braintree Garden Community would be served by, or benefit from, the proposed Rapid Transit System for North Essex.

32 SPC would again question whether the Uttlesford part of the Garden Community would be properly and adequately linked to the wider Uttlesford population, or only serve as a dormitory extension to Braintree District.

**ED47D Mode Share Strategy for the North Essex Garden Communities**

33 Reference is made to the fact that establishing improved strategic cycle routes from the GC, and bus priority measures along the B1256, into Braintree will be central to achieving the mode share targets for cycling, rail, and local bus trips could account for up to 20% of all trips by 2026. However, this assumed that 500 dwellings would be delivered by then, rather than the 160 dwellings now envisaged in UDC’s revised housing trajectory.

34 Furthermore, it is apparent from Table 7-4 WOBGC forecast motorised trips and mode share that the motorised trip share by 2033 was seen as being 75%, by 2051 it is expected to be 69% and by 2078 67%, with 33% public transport motorised trips.

35 Even if the optimistic figures set out above are achieved, this still demonstrates that the vast majority of journeys would still be by car.

**ED47F Build out rates in the Garden Communities**

36 SPC considers the identified annual build-out rate for each of the three North Essex Garden Communities of 300 dwellings to be reasonable and realistic.

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12 EXAM Document ED44C, Paragraph 7.10
ED47G NE Authorities’ Position Statement on Delivery Mechanisms

Reference is made to a preference for locally led new town development corporations (LLNTDCs). It is stated that if an LLNTDC is not the delivery vehicle and the garden communities are brought forward by landowners and developers they will be expected to meet all costs associated with the delivery of the garden communities in accordance with the policies in the draft Local Plan and in the proposed Strategic Growth DPDs. Land prices in the area will have to adjust to reflect those policy requirements13.

As we have already highlighted, in respect of West of Braintree Garden Community the lack of clarity regarding its likely delivery mechanism casts considerable doubt upon its actual deliverability within the Plan period.

ED47K NE Garden Communities – Infrastructure Planning, Phasing and Delivery

It is specified that the AECOM work presented is at a high level, and will be expected to be revisited when more detail is provided by the forthcoming master-planning exercises14.

SPC has previously submitted evidence which has highlighted the adverse heritage, landscape and transport impacts of West of Braintree Garden Community. It believes that the master-planning exercise will result in less development being capable of delivery, and thus a lower amount of housing to fund and deliver the infrastructure required.

PC/1472
15 August 2019

13 EXAM Document ED44G, Paragraph 13
14 EXAM Document ED44K, Paragraph 1.1