

# **Report to Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: 15 March 2016**

**Subject: Brentwood Draft Local Plan 2013 to 2033**

**Officer contact for further information: I White**

**Committee Secretary: A Hendry**

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**SCRUTINY**



Epping Forest District Council

## **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**That the following comments be made to Brentwood Borough Council in response to the consultation on its Draft Local Plan 2016:**

- (a) To support Brentwood Borough Council's spatial strategy which**
  - (i) concentrates new housing and employment development in the A12 and A127 corridors; and**
  - (ii) allows for limited release of Green Belt for development, and limited development, including infilling, within rural villages;**
  
- (b) To support the aim of Brentwood Borough Council to make provision for its full Objectively Assessed Housing Needs (7,240 new houses) entirely within its own area;**
  
- (c) To suggest that the final version of the Local Plan should include**
  - (i) direct reference to the Duty to Co-operate and related future arrangements with neighbouring authorities; and**
  - (ii) consideration of the potential for joint working with neighbouring authorities to make sufficient provision for the needs of the travelling community, with particular reference to paragraphs 4(d), 10 (c) and 16 of "Planning policy for traveller sites" (2015).**

## **Report:**

1. The Brentwood Draft Local Plan includes the strategy, planning policies and proposed land allocations intended to cover the period 2013 to 2033. The consultation period runs from 10<sup>th</sup> February to 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016. The document can be viewed at: [www.brentwood.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.brentwood.gov.uk/localplan)
  
2. The Borough has an area of about 15,300 ha, 89% of which is Green Belt. Its 2011 population was 73,601 with the 2014 mid-year estimate being 75,600. It provides about 30,000 jobs, dominated by micro- and small businesses.
  
3. The last planning consultation from Brentwood Borough Council was called "Strategic Growth Options" and was received in January 2015. This Council's formal response was made by Portfolio Holder decision in February 2015 as there was not time to report to a relevant Committee. The response was generally favourable and supportive, welcoming Brentwood's commitment to accommodate all of its Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) within its own boundary. Brentwood also acknowledged the importance of working with neighbouring authorities on cross-boundary issues including Crossrail, employment land and job provision, and making provision for the travelling community.

4. The Draft Local Plan includes 13 Strategic Objectives under 5 themes – (i) Managing Growth; (ii) Sustainable Communities; (iii) Economic Prosperity; (iv) Environmental Protection and Enhancement; and (v) Quality of Life & Community Infrastructure. The Plan's Draft Spatial Strategy divides the Borough into 4 areas – (a) Rural North (this area adjoins the Epping Forest District boundary); (b) A12 corridor - including Brentwood town and Shenfield; (c) Rural South; and (d) A127 corridor. The settlement hierarchy identifies 4 categories – (i) Brentwood town and its connected local centres; (ii) village service centres, including Ingatestone and, later in the Plan period, Dunton Hills (adjoining Basildon) and West Horndon; (iii) larger villages – 7 named; and (iv) smaller villages – 5 named.

5. The Draft Plan seeks to fully meet its OAHN within Brentwood's boundary – 7,240 houses (net) between 2013 and 2033 - an average rate of 362 per annum. Provision will also be made for an additional 5,000 jobs (250/annum), requiring about 33ha new employment land mainly located (23.4 ha proposed) at Junction 29 of the M25 – Brentwood Enterprise Park.

6. Brentwood's preferred approach is to achieve the right balance between conserving the Borough's character and delivering development which meets the needs of all those who live or work in the area, and those who visit. Key considerations are land availability, development needs, scale of growth proposed, the existing settlement pattern and hierarchy, and capacity of places to accommodate growth in a sustainable manner.

7. Areas within the two key transport corridors (ie the A12 and A127) create the focus for sustainable growth. Brentwood and Shenfield will be the main focus for development in the A12 corridor supported by two strategic allocations in the A127 corridor, making provision for new homes and jobs.

8. To meet local needs fully there will be limited release of Green Belt for development within transport corridors, in strategic locations to deliver self-sustaining communities with accompanying local services, and urban extensions with clear defensible physical boundaries to avoid further sprawl and provide development swiftly.

9. Limited development, including infilling where appropriate, will take place in villages within rural areas at a level which maintains local amenity and distinctiveness, and commensurate with available services and facilities. This means that development in the Rural North of the Borough (the area adjoining this district) is extremely unlikely to be of significant extent or to have any adverse consequences for Epping Forest District.

10. Brownfield opportunities will be encouraged where appropriate schemes help to meet local needs, and help to ensure that villages remain as thriving communities. This includes the redevelopment of previously developed sites in the Green Belt. The Draft Plan calculates that if all proposed development allocations come forward and are eventually removed from the Green Belt, this would reduce the total area by 1% - i.e. the Borough should still be 88% Green Belt by 2033.

11. The Essex Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) published in July 2014 identified a need for an additional 84 pitches in the Borough between 2013 and 2033. Since July 2013, permission has been granted for 17 new pitches, reducing the GTAA target to 67. The Draft Plan includes a criteria-based policy to deal with planning applications for pitches and proposes the Dunton Hills "Garden Village" as a broad location for future provision of about 20 pitches.

12. While the Draft Plan makes reference to the revised DCLG guidance (Planning policy for traveller sites (August 2015)) and the main changes which have been introduced – including definitions – there is no mention made of what the guidance says about the possible preparation of joint development plans to deal with this particular issue. The point is that Epping Forest District and Brentwood Borough are in a very similar situation – ie with challenging pitch provision targets from the GTAA (112 and 84 respectively) and with very

comprehensive Green Belt coverage (92% and 89% respectively), so there could be some advantage in considering joint provision in the general area of the common boundary. The Draft Plan suggests that the target for new pitches may fall slightly in light of the revised guidance, and the GTAA is being reviewed.

**Reason for decision:** While the consultation document raises no issues of concern for this Council, it is considered important to respond formally as a neighbouring authority to satisfy Duty to Co-operate requirements.

**Options considered and rejected:** Not to respond to the consultation.

**Resource implications:**

Legal and Governance Implications: These could arise if there is agreement about, or even the production of a joint development plan for, shared provision of sites and pitches for the travelling community. The Council is a statutory consultee to the Brentwood Borough Local Plan.

Safer, Cleaner Greener Implications: There are no such implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Consultation Undertaken: None required – the recommendations of this report and the Council's response to the consultation will be considered by the Neighbourhoods and Communities Select Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

Background Papers: Brentwood Draft Local Plan 2013 – 2033 (January 2016); Planning policy for traveller sites (DCLG August 2015)

**Impact Assessments:**

Risk Management: There are no risk management implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

Equality: There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations of this report.