

Explanation

I am using the PDF printed version of the 'Strategic Growth Options Consultation as a basis for my comments as requested. However I have struggled massively in trying to get a word version or to input my comments online so I am 'partially duplicating' the form for ease (I hope) of cross reference.

Before I start I would like to question the nature of the consultation and its description as a strategic study. It has come as a huge surprise to me and my neighbours to find a document that has been written about in the Brentwood Gazette many times and also elsewhere that also includes detailed areas that are suggested as potential development sites. In my line of work and past experience as an IT consultant, that is not a strategy but a tactical document. The strategy should surely be decided (i.e. Centralised development versus distributed development) and then sites sought to comply with that strategy.

The inclusion of suggested sites has worried so many people and since so many are sites that have been rejected previously as unsuitable there is a distinct feeling of impotence and hopelessness about our ability to determine the shape and character of our community and living environment.



Q1: Do you agree with the three broad areas, for the purpose of considering approaches to growth?

NO – The definitions of the 4 options would seem to define the options for GROWTH but only insofar as growth being dictated by central government. I would however have preferred that ANY future growth is determined ONLY by LOCAL need from organically driven need i.e. the needs of those already resident in the area rather than to accommodate a major influx from other areas. It has been the case for at least 30 years that Brentwood is effectively FULL and now that the major development sites (Old Laundry Site, Warley Hospital, Geary Drive etc.) have been used up then the expression about fitting a quart into a pint pot seems appropriate.

By pure definition and based on the fact that the centre of a circle is infinitely small and the outside infinitely large, then areas such as Brentwood that have undergone radical structural and social change have far less room for additional growth whereas the areas further out from London on the circle have more space to grow with less social impact.

The change from a family based town to a transient population of 'individual flat dwellers' has already brought its issues and further weakening of communities by additional growth is unwelcome and unsettling and definitely NOT SUSTAINABLE.

Q2: Do you agree with the issues raised for each of these three areas?

YES – as far as they go!

This is the main part of the representations I wish to make.

2.14 and 2.15 give a satisfactory overview of the issues but they are not in this summary put in the context of the history of development of the Northern Villages (which for brevity I will call NV from here on.)

From an emotional viewpoint, and I will concentrate on Doddinghurst and its immediate areas, the community has seen a change in cohesion as have all areas over the 35 years since I moved here. The willingness and ability of residents to not only to participate but also contribute to the activities and social fabric of the village has been greatly impacted by the major trend towards both 'parents' in a family unit working and typically commuting to work outside the area and with no realistic prospect of an increase in 'local' employment so the oft quoted 'sustainability argument' is a very large red herring.

This tendency has huge implications for the 'voluntary' capacity of the village to help with early years child care, school based projects and after school supervision and help of senior age children. There is by locating more housing in the NV's an increase in the commuting not only to work but also to child care and at an older age, major isolation of young people from their friends due to a poor bus service.

Speaking as a parent of children (23 and 26), there is now a desire amongst young people to be located in towns. They don't want the drive to a station and the isolation of the last bus into Brentwood at 6.30 and none on a Sunday.

The villages are not as socially attractive to today's young people as they were to my generation who grew up in the London area and love the rural isolation of the villages. Many of those in the 'social housing' are heard to say that they feel cut off and miss the transport options of the town.

Is it therefore sensible to create yet more housing in the NV's that only compound that problem? (the relative house prices and the trends will I think justify my comments that the villages are not seen as so desirable as they were with the time and cost of driving to the train and facilities.)

Q3: Do you have any comments on the appropriateness of particular sites?

As a high level overview, there are no sites defined in the document that are suitable with the exception of the 'doctors surgery site' in Outings Lane.

It is my firm belief and opinion that ALL of the rest are based on long term attempts to build on sites to the benefit ONLY of the developer and NOT the community of Doddinghurst.

They are in general Trojan horse developments that would set a DEVASTATING precedent for very major ongoing development and in many cases are on sites which have been repeatedly and firmly rejected by both Doddinghurst residents and by BDC planning.

In particular, site 070 has been repeatedly rejected as creating a new area for housing and extending the natural boundary of the village. The road at that point is treacherous and the wall at the side of the road supports the earthen bank that was put in place many years ago in order to widen the road. It is a blind bend and the local residents have REPEATEDLY come out in force to oppose development of the site.

I will now turn to the most important, to me, suggested developments – 143, 224, 185.

Together these developments threaten to completely destroy the rural character of the area. I acknowledge that 143 and 224 would have a major impact on me at 25 Park Meadow due to their location.

It is my contention that together, the three suggested sites are very definitely an attempt to build along the entire length of the unmade up part of Brook Lane. Brook Lane probably represents the best and most defining nature and character of the village. As its name suggests, the untarmaced

road follows the Brook stream until it reaches a point where vehicles can no longer get through. It has been a beautiful walk for generations and certainly with my children as they grew up. There have been repeated and ever increasing numbers of attempts recently to ride roughshod over the fact that the properties in Brook Lane were originally weekend 'sheds' made typically of wood and used by those

Putting aside emotion, the potential for developing even a small amount of this i.e. 143, 224 and 185 is effectively NIL since suitable access and egress for any of the sites is not available.

SITE 143 – this is bounded by Lime Grove and Peartree Lane (both parts). Lime Grove is a narrow Road that is already frequently difficult to get through with parked cars. It is doubtful if a fire engine could gain access to 143 in an emergency.

Peartree Lane (near Post Office) is similar in nature to Lime Grove and has no capacity for more traffic to site 143.

Peartree Lane (unmade up part exiting onto Doddinghurst Road between Apple tree crescent and Mountnessing Lane – this has long been a local concern. It was unused for 30 years and was overgrown and impassable for vehicles but has at times in the past few years been used by some in suitable vehicles to gain access to the bottom of Lime Grove. It is a 'lethal' turnout onto the Doddinghurst Road on a blind bend without potential for improvement.

It might be thought that access could be made from my road, Park Meadow, but even if a very narrow strip of land at the bottom were used and even if it provided a sufficiently wide access, then the resultant traffic onto Mountnessing Lane and then onto the Doddinghurst Road would increase further this already dangerous set of junctions.

Likewise with access through somewhere in Peartree Close. Peartree Close was the result of 2 successive developments of the long gardens of houses on the Doddinghurst Road and has already increased the traffic in the top of Park Meadow at the junction mentioned above and is for local residents the final acceptable development to be tolerated.

This junction is almost blind and is a derestricted road with 'just' enough for 2 passing cars at this point. Traffic uses it as a cut through from Mountnessing to Brentwood and it can be very dangerous to turn out of safely. In addition a double decker school bus turns at the top and then reverses into the top of Park Meadow. It is a dangerous junction and cannot take further traffic.

This then causes me to turn to suggested site **224** which is one of those sites mentioned previously as having been developed from original weekend 'getaway' shacks where the amount of land was as we learned from a milkman years ago 'as much as you want and can walk around'. The resultant long gardens are in the green belt but the owners (and developers) have regularly tried to get around the limitations for their own benefit and frequently built first and asked for planning permission later (though I am not suggesting this in the case of this property but generally with these properties.)

If 224 was developed then supposing that around 50 (as a complete guess!) houses were built on 143 and 224 then they would either have to exit via the routes described for 143 or through the Brook Lane junction with Mountnessing Lane / Pettits Lane. This is a terrible turning without any visibility to the fast traffic from the left (from Mountnessing) at up to 60mph and Mountnessing Lane is only just suitable for 2 cars to pass slowly and that supposes that the edge of the road is complete without deep ruts and potholes which it suffers from terribly.

Mountnessing Lane is not regarded as important enough currently to get winter gritting and with the overflowing river at the low point there is frequently sheet ice on the bend just before a very damaged bridge and before a right hand bend that cars speed around. I could go on but suffice to say that exiting from either end of Mountnessing Lane / Pettits Lane is dangerous already with the current traffic levels.

Site 185 – I will only say that this is a peculiar and opportunistic suggestion. It cannot by itself be viable and it suggests that this and the 224 site are considered as a way of developing all along Brook Lane. The issues of traffic, access, water, sewerage, electricity, gas etc etc that this would raise would I imagine count this out of any serious consideration.

Sites 143 and 224

I have addressed the ruinous result on the rural nature of the area that these suggested sites would cause and the damage to the quality of life and small community feel they would cause. I will now turn to practical issues of services.

Sewerage and other 'piped' services – it has long been the case that there is no ability for anything but the conversion of an occasional property in the village because of the lack of sewerage capacity. **This has been upheld by many planning enquiries.**

Likewise, I believe that the availability of **water** is also limited.

I know from my professional training that the cabling for telephony / broadband is seriously in need of replacement and is limited in capacity at itsd local point (i.e. from the green cabinets to houses.)

The **gas** mains in Doddinghurst Road are like most of the old local infrastructure groaning at the continued additions of houses over the past 40 years and indeed have on one stretch more repairs than original pipe.

To continue to add to existing additions is as non sensical as adding electrical extension to extension blocks and as dangerous and uneconomical.

To upgrade the infrastructure would be inefficient use of capital compared to the number of extra properties gained and the huge impact on residents and particularly given that one of the strategies calls for 'filling in around the edge of villages' so that a huge amount of new infrastructure would be needed.

It would be far more efficient to create a new infrastructure such as that suggested at Dunton where there is real benefit from the dedication of such investment and the resultant (new) community benefits as a whole. (This however is still based on the diktat that central government is imposing on residents not of their own free will !!

Schools, Doctors and other local essential provision.

The schools are full and it is impossible to get a doctors' appointment. How are these to be addressed if there is more housing built?

Buses and public transport + Hospital visits

The 261 is our only remaining lifeline to Brentwood. It finishes at 18.30 and doesn't run on a Sunday. Residents and particularly older residents are forced onto taxis and in addition we are 'lumped together' with the outer London health services so that a patient may be at Queens or worse at Goodmayes hospital

IMPACT on new residents

It is my opinion that the inconvenience of many of these factors which we as long term residents have accepted will not be OK with a new generation and this therefore suggests that it is preferable to build new communities where they are addressed at the outset rather than impose new housing on us so ruining our way of life without benefit to potential new residents.

Q4: Given the greater capacity for growth along the A127 Corridor, which of the sites put forward do you think is the best location for growth?

It is the least of the evils to develop along the A127 where there is a need for infrastructure and which would be the most efficient use of capital reaching the greatest number of new homes. The same investment in other areas would be away from natural transport lines and provide for less and more dispersed homes.

Q5: Should the A12 Corridor accommodate growth by releasing sites on the edge of urban areas?

It is a misnomer that the A12 is an accessible corridor onto which the traffic from new homes can safely and easily gain access. The A12 being a 2 lane highway already has issues with access on and off at the junctions and the majority of the road in the Brentwood area is either at high level, single direction access or on the border of Chelmsford. The build at the fringes is therefore illogical.

Q6: In order to provide for local need is it preferable for greenfield sites on the edge of villages to be released, or to develop brownfield sites (both within Green Belt)?

Neither. To build on Greenfield Greenbelt sites at the edge of villages destroys the very aspect that makes them communities and places of belonging. The greenbelt was established in order to prevent the never ending sprawl of development threatened in the 1930's and it is not in this generations remit to 'steal' that preserved environment from future generations.

To build on brown field sites has been seen in this area a golden opportunity for unscrupulous developers and landowners to destroy sites so that they get planning permission to replace an 'eyesore' with new homes. This cynical disregard for the views wishes and needs of local residents should be strongly resisted except in very isolated cases such as the old Doddinghurst Doctors Surgery site in Outings Lane which encapsulates a small area defined as green belt but which most residents would be surprised to find so.

Q7: To enable future employment need to be met do you agree that the most sustainable approach is to allocate new sites close to the strategic highway network?

Yes but I would go further in encouraging the use of public transport and therefore the sites should have good road and rail access and a good bus service.

Q8: In order to ensure that the Town Centre remains economically sustainable, do you agree that a "Town Centre First" approach should be taken to retail development?

Yes this seems sensible to avoid a high street that only contains night time venues and cheap shops.

Q9: Are there opportunities for more open space provision in the area where you live?

Doddinghurst has managed its resources well over the years through local action and dedicated volunteers to provide sport and recreation areas as well as open areas. I believe that this current provision is OK.

Q10: Please rate the level to which you value the landscape near where you live.

This question gives no scale or metric so I will just say that I value the landscape as 10 out of 10 and know that my family have appreciated that landscape and surroundings as they have grown up. However I also believe from local conversations that this love of the countryside including its associated deprivations may not cross all generations and some who have moved into the village bemoan the lack of transport, lighting and other facilities they were used to in their former homes.

I would therefore question why we are considering building new homes in an area that many no longer appreciate and in so doing destroy the landscape and environment and community that the current residents value so much.

Q11: To what extent do you think the following is present in the landscape near where you live: Houses; Commercial buildings; Nature Reserves; Farmland; Woodland; Wasteland; Infrastructure; Leisure Facilities; other?

What a strange question!

The landscape consists of Houses in the Doddinghurst direction; no obvious commercial buildings as such; Farmland; Woodland; very little infrastructure and parks as leisure facilities in addition to playgrounds and a village hall at the centre of the village.

Q12: Have we considered the main infrastructure issues? Are there other important issues to consider?

The principle 'services' based infrastructure issues relate to the availability of water and sewerage which particularly sewerage is already over burdened; Gas / electricity both of which creak as the additions to the village over the past 30+ years put further demands on their ancient infrastructure typically to the point of failure.

The road system both within the village and at its access points of Church Lane, Outings Lane, Doddinghurst Road and Mountnessing Lane have as much traffic as can safely be accommodated and with little opportunity for improvement.

The nature of the village is such that spines come off the Doddinghurst Road and Church Lane (going into Mill Lane which most people think of as Church Lane). These spines are typically long and may have 1 or 2 further roads off them. The main spines and particularly Lime Grove are very difficult to get through at times due to the 'necessary' parking outside houses.

Speaking as a network designer in a previous career, the ability to provide to these spines is already past the natural design point and the accesses to the core Doddinghurst Road / Church Lane is dangerous. Additionally, the other routes in such as Outings Lane have their own dangers as has been proven by accidents over the years especially in icy weather (look at the numbers of cars that end up in the ditches at Park Wood each month.)

The needs for new infrastructure in Doddinghurst compared to the cost versus new homes served would suggest that this is not the area for development.

That point and others has been at the heart of the planning rejections for almost all of the 'suggested' sites in the current consultation and why I am so concerned that previously refused planning applications seem to have gained a new life as if rising from the dead to haunt us!

Q13: What do you think the priorities for infrastructure spending should be?

Put the money into areas where it will give the greatest return i.e. benefit the greatest number of residents which equates to new areas not piecemeal additions onto unwilling areas such as Doddinghurst where it will only destroy and not benefit residents.

Provide sufficient affordable parking near stations to enable residents to use public transport and also improve bus services to a point where they are a viable alternative to the car. Where possible and sensible, provide safe cycle routes. Unfortunately this is effectively impossible from the villages as has been demonstrated by previous attempts by the council and voluntary bodies.

Stop the illogical trend to send people to far-away hospitals! Many or most residents have moved out of London and have little or no affinity to it now. However for some reason we are expected to

get to Goomayes hospital or Queens or Basildon. It is hard enough for young people to achieve this but when an elderly person needs to visit a spouse in hospital say on a Sunday it is VERY expensive and tiring for them and massively increases their sense of isolation which ultimately causes additional care costs for them. We are a part of Essex to whom we pay council tax and although I acknowledge that Health is from Taxation it seems often to be a fact that is ignored.